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REMINISCENCES

OF

PRINCE TALLEYRAND;

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WITH EXTRACTS

FROM HIS

MANUSCRIPTS, SPEECHES,

AND

POLITICAL WRITINGS.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,

GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1848.

00142014

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REMINISCENCES

OF THE LATE

PRINCE TALLEYRAND.

CHAPTER I.

THE DUC D'AIGUILLON AND MADAME DUBARRI—TALLEYRAND'S RETURN FROM AMERICA—CHÉNIER, MADAME DE STAËL, AND MADAME DE LA BOUCHARDIE.

"You have begun, *malgré vous*," said I to C., the next time we met *tête-à-tête*, "the *vie anecdotique* of the prince, which I have always felt sure would prove so full of interest. Your strange story of Madame de la Motte is quite sufficient to excite curiosity in those who love to see the *truth* established where prejudice and falsehood have reigned

so long. It would be a curious study to follow in the same manner, step by step, the life of the Prince de Talleyrand, and give to those who seek for *truth alone* (and they are many) the real impressions made upon a powerful organization, like his own, by the wondrous changes in which he bore so conspicuous a part; the conduct of those with whom he co-operated in the great reform which, from the very outset of his career, it is evident he had at heart; and his own conduct with regard to the confederates with whom the strange circumstances amid which he found himself compelled him to associate sometimes, '*malgré lui et à son corps defendant.*'"

"It would be difficult," replied C., "to destroy prejudices which have taken root. Mankind in general cling to them with tenacity, and adopt ready-formed opinions with the greatest facility in proportion as they are improbable and absurd. The Prince de Talleyrand has been the victim of many such errors. From the great reserve, partly natural to his character, and no doubt strengthened by his clerical education, the motives by which he was guided, unexplained by himself, have been left to the interpretation of the mass; and the mass will ever be loth to yield conviction save to the evi-

dence of facts alone. One of the most extraordinary delusions which exist in the public mind with regard to the prince, founded I should think upon no better authority than a brutal attempt at wit made by Napoleon, has been often adopted as a basis for the judgment of his character. 'Kick Talleyrand behind,' said the coarse-minded *sabreur*, 'and look in his face, you will perceive no indication of any sense of the insult.' The *dictum*, which was first uttered by the chattering buffoon of a Parisian *salon*, has been gravely quoted by more than one historian, and has in many cases gone forth as the standard whereby to judge one of the proudest characters that the Almighty ever sent among mankind!

"Again—how often has he been accused of participating in the murder of the Duc d'Enghien: though his whole life disproves the accusation. What single action of his long career can justify this supposition? His aversion to bloodshed—his avoidance of all violent measures—his forgiving temper, which was constitutional—all tend to combat the suspicion; and yet it has been greedily received, not only by his enemies, but even by the writers least interested in the affair—those of foreign

nations, strangers to party-spirit in French politics, and who may be supposed to be mere spectators of the struggle. I think M. de Talleyrand owes this unjust and offensive accusation entirely to the reserve he has always maintained with regard to this event. Had he been more explicit, had he '*spoken out*,' in short, upon the subject, his vilest detractors would not have dared to affix this stain upon his name, while the panegyrists of his great contemporary would have hesitated before the *proofs* which M. de Talleyrand can still produce. Although he even yet mentions with caution all the circumstances connected with this affair, which he himself calls '*déplorable*,' yet I have gathered enough to make the recital interesting to you, and in *tems et lieu* I will put you in possession of the facts; but as you wish me to proceed *par ordre de date*, they will find no place here. Accusation and defiance are contrary to the whole system of conduct of the prince. His forbearance towards his enemies would sometimes excite the indignation of Mirabeau, whose fiery soul gloried in attack, and scorned defeat, from which he rose with fresh venom and fresh vigour.

"'One thing is needed to complete the character

of Talleyrand,' said the giant, in despair at the mildness of the prince, 'he needs unjust imprisonment!' The secret of the whole existence of Mirabeau—of his success—his energy and defiance, may perhaps be found in this simple exclamation. Mirabeau might accuse Talleyrand of coldness and over caution; but it was left for the coarse mind of Napoleon to tax him with baseness and want of self-respect. Now I, who have lived in the intimacy of the prince for many years, and have been in the habit of observing the impression produced upon his temper by outward events, have arrived at the conviction, that it is the very excess of pride, of which Napoleon denied him the slightest portion, that destroys the otherwise perfect equilibrium of his character. I am a believer in the influence of *race*, and can respect the philosophy which tells us that the qualities of the soul are handed down through long generations as well as the features of the body. The proud motto of the sovereign counts of Perigord, adopted in the sixth century, was borne with justice by Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, their descendant: *Ré que Diou!* In the old Perigord language, 'No KING BUT GOD!'

"Would not the simple utterance of this haughty

device form an argument against the accusation of 'versatility of opinion,' of 'change of masters'? The parallel might be carried further still, down to the famous Cardinal de Perigord, friend and confidant of Petrarch, he who is called in Italian history the pope-maker, who in the twelfth century was the nominator of four different pontiffs, and then dethroned the Emperor Louis V. to crown in his stead Charles IV. He, too, was the most able diplomatist of his time, and was deputed to London to negotiate the ransom of the French King John. He succeeded in reducing the ransom, and in obtaining a truce, by the influence of his '*langue mielleuse et dorée*,' as says the quaint old chronicler of the time.

"Henri de Chalais might have saved his life had he but spoken the one word of supplication to his master. 'The king has said that he will pardon you if you will but sue,' said his good old confessor the night before his execution. 'What prevents you, then, Monseigneur, from asking?'

"'The blood of the Talleyrands!' said the prince, and, turning to the wall, spoke no more that night.

"You see they have ever been a taciturn and

haughty race, faithful to the battle-cry of their fierce forefathers. '*Ré que Diou*' must have been graven on their hearts, as well as painted on their banner. Did it never occur to the hard mind of the emperor, that Talleyrand might be insensible to insult from *contempt* of the aggressor? But come, I am wasting time in theory, and you, I am well aware, prefer facts and example.

"The political career of Prince Talleyrand may be said to have begun at his very entrance into life. I have given you a sketch of his childhood—to detail the events of his youth would be to give the history of the close of the eighteenth century. I have heard him say often that few men could boast of having passed through life as he had done—always in a crowd, having to elbow his way through the thickest ranks. During those early years he cannot remember to have enjoyed or experienced a single week's solitude. Always in a crowd, and that crowd composed of all that was celebrated at the time, for wit, fashion, and beauty, by his own merit he was continually in advance, and, long before the age when other men enter the lists, he had already travelled far on the road to fame and fortune. It is this circumstance which

makes his age for ever a subject of dispute. His name has been so long before the public eye, in connexion with those of individuals who had begun their career so many years before him, that it seems as if he himself belonged to another epoch than our own. At the age of twenty-six, when he was named *agent-général* of the clergy, he had already acquired the conviction that the society amid which he was born was tottering to its basis, and, moreover, that it was unworthy of an effort to save it from destruction. I remember being much amused by his description of the very first visit he paid after being invested by his uncle with the title and power of his new office, which, at the time, was one of great trust and influence, and one which demanded great industry and talent.

"He was one day *en confidence* with me, and mentioning several events of the last century. 'How has that poor *siècle* been calumniated,' said he, gaily, 'and yet, after all, I do not see that the *productive* power of your system equals that of the one you so much condemn. Where is the wit of your *salons*, the independence of your writers, the charm and influence of your women? What have you received in exchange for all these, which have

fled for ever? Were I young, I should regret, and wish that I were old, to enjoy, at least in memory, the delicious *existence morale* of *my* time. I would not give the remembrance of those times for all the novelty and what you call *improvements* of the social system of to-day, even with the youth and spirit necessary to enjoyment. 'Tis true there were abuse and exaggeration in many of our institutions, but where is the system in which these do not exist? If our people was devoured with misery and taxes, yours is wasting to the core with *envy* and with discontent. Our *noblesse* was corrupt and prodigal, yours is *bourgeoise* and miserly—greater evils still for the prosperity of the nation. If our king had many mistresses, yours has many masters. Has *he* gained by the exchange? Thus you see it clearly demonstrated that not one of the three orders has advanced in happiness by these wonderful *improvements* which you so much admire.'

"He joined good-naturedly in the laugh which I could not repress at his last regret, and I asked him if he had ever seen the *dernière maîtresse en titre du Roi de France*, Madame Dubarri.

"'Frequently,' replied he, 'both before and

after her disgrace, and, moreover, the last visit I ever paid her has been impressed upon my memory, by the circumstance of its being the first I made after having obtained the dignity of *agent-général du clergé*, which my mother had been soliciting for me so long. I had been the whole morning closeted with my uncle, listening to his various instructions and counsels relative to my new duties. So anxious was the dear good man to make me perfectly aware of the new dignity with which I had just been invested, that he had kept me for more than two hours standing before him. So strict was the clerical etiquette of the time, that he dared not request me to be seated in the presence of the two acolytes, who, by the law of that same etiquette, never left him, night or day, save when he himself was admitted into the presence of a superior.

"'As you may imagine, both my strength and patience were exhausted before my dear uncle's allocution was over, and most heartily did I rejoice when he stretched forth his hand for me to kiss, in token of dismissal. He told me that he had much more to say (I shivered), but that he was anxious I should pay my respects to the minister that very day, as the neglect of such attention might bring

disgrace and *défaveur* at the very outset of my career. I had just time sufficient to gain the minister's hôtel before the closing of his cabinet, so made all speed to quit my uncle's presence, glad to escape even with the prospect of another lecture.

"'I was just descending the steps of the hôtel, when I met the young Duc d'Aiguillon, all excited and *ébouriffé* as usual, with his vest wide open, and his garments in disorder.

"'Where are you going so fast?' exclaimed he, seizing my arm.

"'To call upon the minister, *mon ministre*,' said I, laughing at the look of surprise with which he eyed me, and which betrayed plainly the troubled state of his intellect.

"'*Parbleu!*' exclaimed he, with the twinkling of the eye peculiar to persons in the same state of blessedness in which he then was, 'and so am I going to call upon the minister. My coach is waiting at the corner, let us go together.'

"'To this proposal I could of course offer no objection, being, as I tell you, horribly fatigued with my long *séance*, and having at that time no carriage of my own at command. We walked to

the end of the street arm-in-arm together. He leaned upon me heavily, but was laughing heartily the whole way, as if inspired by some merry thought.

"'You see me thus delighted,' said he, suddenly stopping short, 'at the remembrance of the glorious fun we have just been having at the Trois Marroniers. Why were you not there? We were but three, but diverted ourselves *comme quarante.* Liancourt was *en verve,* and told some of his best anecdotes about—(he hiccupped slightly)—about Madame Dubarri! I should like to see that woman. Did you ever see her?' He nodded assent in answer to his own question, and then, with a tipsy giggle, he pushed me in the side, exclaiming, 'Well, then, jump into the carriage, and I will tell you all about her as we drive along to the minister's.'

"'He spoke some few words to his lackey, and seated himself beside me. The moment he entered, he drew down the blinds of the carriage, and, far from opposing such a measure, I was enchanted at what, in my own mind, I termed his discretion, as I thought that he was beginning to be aware of the state he was in, and was afraid of making himself the public gaze.

"'The duke was one of the most witty men I ever met with. It would be difficult to find a more piquant narrator than himself; and upon this occasion, the little *pointe de vin* which he had taken had awakened his imagination, and caused him to be even more lively and amusing than usual. His gaiety was contagious; and as he told one after the other the most *échevelé* anecdotes of the ex-favourite, all of the kind most likely to have been served up by M. de Liancourt for the entertainment of his dissolute companions, the peals of laughter which his recitals caused me to emit, rivalled his own in noise and duration. So absorbed was I in listening to his merry stories, and so diverted by his pleasant manner of telling them, that I did not perceive the tremendous rate at which the horses were going, nor the length of time which seemed to have been occupied in our short journey to the hôtel of the minister.

"'Once, indeed, d'Aiguillon had stopped in the midst of one of his best narrations to draw aside the blind, exclaiming, 'What, shall we never reach *ce diable de ministre?*' and, after looking out, had thrown himself back with another of those comical laughs, in which I could not help joining with all my heart; but I was so much amused, and felt my-

self so extremely happy, that no suspicion entered my head concerning the direction we had taken, and my only fear began to be, lest we should arrive at our destination before his stock of anecdote was exhausted. In short, any one who had followed in our wake, and heard the peals of laughter which issued from the carriage, would certainly have thought me to have been as drunk as he. This mirth, however, at least as far as I was concerned, was destined to receive a tremendous check by the stopping of the vehicle, and the sudden appearance at the door of the officer of *octroi*, who asked for the toll, which then it was the custom for all private carriages to pay on leaving the capital.

"Good God! where are we?' exclaimed I, in alarm, now for the first time, since I had left my uncle's presence, remembering the importance of the errand upon which I had been despatched, his earnest injunctions to use no delay in paying my official respects to the minister, and the short space of time I had allowed myself to execute his command, even when I had first set out.

"'At the Barrière des Bonshommes!' returned the *employé*, slamming the door, and making the usual sign to the coachman that he might proceed.

"'Before I had recovered from my astonishment, the carriage was again flying along the road, at the full gallop of the horses; and, while I was bawling myself hoarse, to induce the coachmen to stop, again was d'Aiguillon roaring with laughter! I was by this time in a state of great vexation, which seemed rather to increase than diminish my friend's merriment. In vain I pulled the check-string with all my might, and in despair leaned my body from the window to make myself heard by the grinning lackeys: my endeavours to arrest the progress of the carriage, seemed but to increase the speed at which we were going.

"'"Tis useless,' exclaimed d'Aiguillon, drawing me back into my seat, 'the varlets have *my* orders, and *I* am their master *ne vous déplaise;* besides,' continued he, pulling out his watch, 'your minister by this time is as far on the road to Versailles as we are on this; therefore, let us no longer trouble our heads about business, but give ourselves up to pleasure. I promise you as much satisfaction this evening from the remembrance of our trip, as your uncle would have promised you from the security of a good conscience. We are going to spend a delightful hour, so *en avant, et vogue la galère.*'

"'It was in vain that I protested against the deception which he had played upon me. The hair-brained young scamp was too much excited with wine and merriment to listen to reason, and I, myself, could not long resist the influence of his piquant wit, his bon-mots, and comical descriptions, and gave way, with all the good-will of youth and light-heartedness, to the mirth of the moment. I really imagined that he was taking me to some one of the delightful *petites maisons*, with which the environs of Paris abounded at that time, and that we should meet some of his joyous friends to spend the night, as it was evident he had done the one preceding, in fun and frolic, with one or two of the choice spirits with whom he associated. Meanwhile, the carriage went on with increasing rapidity.

"'Where does your friend reside?' inquired I. D'Aiguillon put his finger to his nose, winked and looked cunning, but said nothing. Ruel, Nanterre, Bougival, all were passed, and still we paused not.

"'We are evidently going to St. Germain,' thought I. 'Well, 'tis of no consequence; the mischief is done, and nothing can save me now from the minister's wrath and my poor uncle's dis-

pleasure.' But no—I was wrong. When we came to the bottom of the hill upon which is situated St. Germain, the carriage turned suddenly off the road to the left, and entered a fine avenue of chestnut-trees, at the end of which I could perceive a pair of lofty iron gates, and, just peering above the trees, the numerous chimneys and shining slates, of what appeared, at the distance, a tolerably-sized château. The adventure now assumed a different aspect; and I began to fear that, so far from the joyous party I had before anticipated, we were destined to swell the number of *convives* at the table of some rich old dowager *en retraite*, and that the treacherous kidnapping of d'Aiguillon was but a wily invention to diminish his own *ennui* by making me share in it.

"'But the reproaches which I addressed to d'Aiguillon were unheard by him; for, having exhausted his stock of scandal, and being himself exhausted by the sleepless night he had passed, he had quietly folded his arms, and sunk back into a sound and heavy slumber; and, proceeding at the same rapid pace with which we had set out, up the avenue within the iron gates, we were soon before the *perron*. As the carriage stopped, I rubbed

my eyes, scarcely able to believe my senses. Was I in a dream? Every object which presented itself to my astonished, horror-stricken gaze seemed familiar to my memory. The marble steps—the hedge of geraniums—the open vestibule with the porphyry columns—and now the doubt becomes certainty! The footman who comes with such agility down the steps to assist us in alighting from the carriage, wears the livery of—I was in a perspiration from head to foot—of Madame Dubarri! Yes—the detestable *plaisanterie* of d'Aiguillon was now evident. He had brought me to Luciennes, and we were standing, four years too late, before the Pavillon. The trees had grown since I was there last, therefore I had not at first recognised the place.

"'I was now really perplexed and angry, and by a violent shake awoke the Duke, who, torn thus rudely from his well-earned slumber, seemed even more astonished than myself. The door was open, the steps let down, and the gold-lace varlets waiting patiently our determination to alight. The situation was most embarrassing; there was a great deal of hurry and bustle in the interior of the Pavillon, a running to and fro in the vestibule, and a great

calling of "Clarisse" and "Marianne." It was evident that our arrival had been already perceived, and had already caused a certain sensation. I was determined, however, not to lend myself to the folly of my tipsy friend, and bade the coachman, in a peremptory tone, to use no delay in turning his horses, and conveying us back to Paris; although feeling myself compelled, from the courtesy due to the fair sex, much against my inclination, to give some token of my visit; I left my name, with inquiries after the health of Madame la Comtesse, and regrets that business in Paris prevented my alighting to pay her a visit in person. To this d'Aiguillon, who had been sleeping off, in some degree, the fumes of the past night, offered no objection. He had, no doubt, recovered his senses sufficiently to perceive that he was not in a fit state, either *au moral* or *au physique*, to appear before the lady, and therefore, to my great delight, remained silent. We had once more gained the great gate of the park, and were waiting while the *concierge* was opening to it to let us pass out, when we were overtaken by one of the countess's pages, who came running, panting and breathless, to request, on the part of his mistress, as a great favour,

that we would return, as she would be quite unhappy at the idea of losing my visit. Of course there was no possibility of refusal, and we were forced to turn back, myself in no very pleasant mood, as you may imagine, and even d'Aiguillon, whose impudence equalled that of Don Juan himself, rather subdued as the moment of trial drew nigh.

"'We were ushered into a saloon on the ground-floor, looking into the garden, where Madame Dubarri was waiting with evident impatience. I was indeed quite overcome, almost to embarrassment, by the eagerness of welcome with which she received me, and the evident delight with which she accepted the introduction of my young friend. Poor Dubarri! the days were gone when her *salons* were crowded with the *élite* of the court, when her boudoir was the rendezvous of all that was elegant and *distingué* in the capital. The solitude in which she lived at the Pavillon, for which she was so unfit, formed a strange contrast to the crowded gallery at Versailles, where I had seen her last.

"'No individual has ever been more calumniated than the poor, unhappy Dubarri. In most of the

histories of "My own Times," the "Mémoires pour Servir," and the Souvenirs of M. This and Madame That, which have been vomited from the press during the last fifty years, she has been accused of every vice, of every crime that perverted human nature is capable of committing. Nothing was ever more unjust than these accusations. She had never forgotten, even amid all her grandeur, her ancient calling, and always felt a weight of *ennui*, of which she complained openly, with the greatest *naïveté*, at the pomp and ceremony which surrounded her at Versailles; and, above all, at the obsequious homage of which she was the object. She had succeeded in debasing her royal lover to her own level; but she was without ambition, and never sought to raise herself, or to use the influence she had acquired over the mind of the king for wanton mischief or malice. In the king's cabinet, in his council-cabinet, or in the *galerie des glaces*, when assisting the king in his reception of foreign ambassadors, she was always the same "*Jeanne la Folle, de chez la Mère Morry.*" She had remained in everything the very type of the successful members of the unfortunate class from which she had been taken. Violent and vindictive against those

who offended her, her wrath was speedily forgotten in the more powerful passion for amusement and pleasure, which seemed, like a very demon, to have possession of her soul. Night and day, from sunrise to sunset, was she ever ready for a noisy game, or a brawling dance.

"'I think it must have been her very indifference to the political intrigues going on at court, which caused her to maintain her influence so long. Louis Quinze was weary of the propriety of demeanour and great talents of Madame de Pompadour, and was glad, for the sake of variety, to *encanailler* his royalty with the representation, such as poor "Jeanne la Folle" could give to the life, of the habits and manners of a class of persons of whose existence he ought scarcely to have been aware. One great justice ought to be done to her memory—she was no hypocrite. She never sought to play the fine lady, or to assume the airs and state of the *noblesse.* On the contrary, her great delight was in talking of the *happy* days of her youth. I have heard from those who were admitted to the private *réunions* in the *petits appartemens* at Versailles, that no actress ever possessed greater flexibility of histrionic power than Madame

Dubarri. Her talent at mimicry and caricature would have done honour to any stage, and it was one of the king's greatest enjoyments to listen to her description of the scenes and circumstances with which she had been familiar, before the happy chance which opened to her a life so different from that to which she then aspired. It seems that her comic powers were so great, that the satiated and *ennuyé* old king was once known to take a brilliant ring from his finger in the enthusiasm of the moment, and place it on her own, and, forgetting the presence of the courtiers, kiss her heartily on both cheeks, after one of these representations, at the same time declaring that she had given him more pleasure than he had ever received from the best actors of the Comédie Française.

"'She alone furnished the amusement of the royal *petits soupers* for many years, and, while the people imagined that the king had retired for a while from public affairs, for the benefit of his health, and to recruit his strength, before entering on the great measures of reform which he had so long proposed for the advantage of the nation, roars of laughter and lewd songs were heard by the sentinel on duty at the gate of Trianon, issuing

from the royal retreat, and making him imagine that he was pacing before one of the unholy dens which infest the narrow streets of the Quartier de la Cité.

"'Six years had elapsed since I had seen Madame Dubarri. I found her but little altered in appearance, and much subdued in manner—she was humbled to the very soul. It was evident that she was perishing with *ennui*, not with regret for the splendour in which she had lived, nor the power which she might have possessed, had she so willed, but for the gay and gallant company she had enjoyed, the laughter, the practical jokes, the *guerre pampan*—a game which she had introduced, and which was still played at court, although she was no longer allowed to be there to share in the mirth which it excited. Her lamentations at her *délaissement*, as she called the comparative solitude in which she lived, were at first most piteous; but, as of old, her griefs were soon forgotten in the delight of the moment, and she soon gave way, with all the frankness and *bonhomie* of her character, to the unwonted delight imparted by the visit of two persons who could give her news of the court, and of what was said and what was

done among those whom, so short a time before, she had ruled as queen, but whom she could not now either bribe or flatter into the slightest demonstration of courtesy.

"'You are, no doubt, curious to hear an opinion of Madame Dubarri's beauty from the lips of one who has seen her both in the days of her prosperity and after her downfal. She was a person of small, almost diminutive stature, extremely frail and delicate in feature, which saved her from being vulgar; but, even from the first, she always wore that peculiarly *fané* look, which she owed to a youth of dissipation, a maturity of unbounded indulgence. At the period of my visit, she was about six-and-thirty years of age, but, from her child-like form and delicacy of countenance, appeared much younger, and her *gambades*, and unrestrained gestures of supreme delight, on having, as she said, *quelqu'un à qui parler*, did not seem displaced. Although alone, and evidently not in expectation of visiters, her toilet was brilliant and *recherché*, the result of the necessity of killing time. The portrait, which is popular from the engraving, in which she is represented sipping coffee, is the best resemblance of her which has ever

been attempted, and the likeness was most striking on this day, from her being attired in the same style as that represented in the picture. I could see that d'Aiguillon was charmed, and in spite of the clouds through which his reason had to make its way, he behaved in a discreet and gentlemanlike manner.

"'It really was a curious day, that 16th of August, 1780—begun in the drawing-room of the Archbishop of Rheims, listening on bended knee to the exhortations of the good and pious prelate, and finished in the boudoir of "Jeanne la Folle!" It might be taken as the very type of the chaos which, from one end to the other of the social system, existed at the period. I was impatient to return to Paris, and did not wish to prolong my visit, but the poor comtesse sued so earnestly for another and another *petit quart d'heure*, that I had not the heart to hurry away. She showed us, with great complacency, all through the grounds belonging to the Pavillon, which were really beautiful, particularly the *jets-d'eau* and the artificial fountains which decorated the gardens; and there was something particularly touching in the tone in which she spoke of the kindness of poor "France"

(the name by which she still designated the late king), who had caused the water-works of Marly to be brought down to the Pavillon, in order to give her a pleasant surprise on her birthday. Their removal must have cost several millions of the public money, but what was that compared to the pleasure of winning a smile of delight from "Jeanne la Folle!"

"'On returning to the Pavillon, we found a splendid collation spread in the saloon. Here was the 'vantage ground of the Comtesse Dubarri; no one could better do the honours of a well-served table. In vain we excused ourselves upon the plea of our *negligé* toilet. She would take no refusal, saying, with a sigh, "I excuse you with all my heart; and fear not, we are sure to be alone; there is no danger of intrusion from visiters."

"'It was impossible to resist the melancholy tone in which she uttered the words; and, moreover, d'Aiguillon was not proof against the assurance which she gave him that she would make him judge of the Tokay which King Casimir sent as a present to Louis XIV. So we yielded to the gentle violence of the comtesse, and consented to remain. We were both well rewarded for the good

deed, each of us in the way most agreeable to himself—d'Aiguillon with plenteous libations of the most exquisite wine, and myself with stories and adventures of the court of Louis Quinze, which to me served as most precious *renseignemens*, and gave me the clue to much that has taken place in France since that time.

"'As for Madame Dubarri herself, she soon turned from her lamentations concerning the behaviour of the young court towards her, to give herself up to all the merriment of the hour, and was soon excited by the good fellowship of d'Aiguillon, whose "discretion" had worn off with the first few glasses, and who had retrograded into the same state of hilarity as when he met me in the morning. I could not quote now one half of the *bon mots*, the puns, the *quolibets*, uttered during the course of that repast. It was a complete souvenir of the *régence*, and I could well understand that the influence which Madame Dubarri had possessed over the mind of the king had owed its origin to the nature of the *joyeux propos* with which her conversation teemed, and which to Louis Quinze must have worn the mask of originality, as it was not probable that he could ever have heard the like before. I know not what hour

of the night it could have been when we rose from table, of course much too late to think of returning home.

"'We adjourned to the boudoir of the comtesse—a delicious retreat which poor "France" had taken a pleasure in adorning with his own hands—and here the gaiety of the pair became even more uproarious. Madame Dubarri told us much of her past life, never sparing details which would have excited astonishment, even had she told them of another, but which, related of herself, became unaccountable. She showed us, among other curiosities which the boudoir contained, a little volume, richly bound in white silk, and which consisted of the manuscript journal of the king, during an absence of a few days that he was once compelled to make at Versailles, while she remained at Fontainebleau. By one of those curious chances, which I believe happen to all who *observe*, my eye fell upon a passage which immediately set at rest, in my mind, the long discussions and disputes which had been excited concerning the dismissal of M. de Choiseul from the ministry. It ran thus, and forget not, that it was in the handwriting of the king himself.

"'*Friday*, 10*th*.—Sent off the courier with the

morning billet to you, *ma chère*, then arose. Looked from the window to see if the weather would be fine for the hunt. Saw on the wall of the *Cours des Veneurs*, an impertinent allusion to somebody, chalked in letters large enough for me to read even at that distance. One of the *valets de meute* must have been the perpetrator. Left my chamber in great anger. Found M. de Choiseul waiting in my study. Showed him the writing, took occasion to say (as much for himself, as in reference to the offence of which I complained) all the good I know (and it is not a little) of somebody. Wishing to anticipate all the malicious thoughts which I feared my unrestrained praise of somebody might give rise to in his mind, said, in conclusion, "After all, the worst that can be said is, that I succeeded Saint Foix in her affections." "Exactly so, sire," muttered Choiseul, "just as your majesty succeeded to King Pharomond, as sovereign of this country." I did not choose to speak further on this subject, so changed the conversation. Choiseul likes an innocent *plaisanterie*, but there is no harm in Choiseul."

"'Upon what a slight thread will sometimes hang the destinies of men and of nations! Is it not

evident that this "innocent *plaisanterie*," as it was called by the goodnatured but obtuse Louis Quinze, was of the kind most likely to inflame the hasty, choleric temper of Jeanne la Folle? In my own mind, I feel perfectly convinced that it was this ill-timed joke of the minister which caused his disgrace, as I find upon reference to dates, that it was upon the king's return to Fontainebleau that the famous scenes of the oranges, "Saute Choiseul—Saute Praslin," was enacted, and both Choiseul and Praslin were disgraced. It was evident that the page had been often read, for it was worn, and the writing in some places dimmed, as if with tears. Perhaps it was this circumstance which had caused the book to open just at this very passage, and rendered me the involuntary sharer in a secret which is not generally known even to this day.

"'After we had sufficiently examined all the curiosities and expensive baubles with which the boudoir was decorated, Madame Dubarri, whose dread of seeing us depart seemed to increase as the hours flew by, then insisted on displaying the jewels which "*ce cher France*" had given her on various occasions. It was, indeed, a splendid sight; but, when I complimented her upon the

possession of the finest rubies I had ever beheld, she shook her head mournfully, and said with a sigh, that she would give them all for a few days participation in the rejoicings which were going on *there* (she pointed to Versailles), not as she once had been, planner and promoter, but even as mere spectator. I asked why she did not seek forgetfulness in change of scene; why she did not travel. No, she could not tear herself away from the spot where she had reigned so long; she still had hope that the young queen would consent to receive her at court; she scarcely seemed to care upon what footing she was admitted, so long as she were allowed to join in the gaieties and festivities which were going on, almost beneath her very eye, and from which she felt it such a misfortune to be thus excluded.

" 'Her emotion was but momentary, however; for with the tears which the memory of the change in her situation had called up still in her eyes, she turned to my companion, and defied him to a game at *bilboquet*, declaring that she had, in former times, passed whole hours at this play with the king, who was passionately fond of it, but could never win when she was his adversary. D'Aiguillon readily

consented, the *bilboquets* were brought, and more wine was served. In spite of the noisy rattle of the balls, and the noisier laughter and loud disputing of the players, I fell asleep, nor did I awake until daylight. To my astonishment, I found the comtesse and her host as eager and busy in the childish game as when they first began—not a whit fatigued, and seemingly disposed to continue for some hours longer. D'Aiguillon was by this time totally incapable of understanding my meaning when I warned him that it was time to go; and I withdrew unobserved, resolving to return alone to Paris, leaving him to finish the adventure as best he could.

"'Just as I reached the gate, I perceived the royal hunt dashing down the side of the hill, and was glad to conceal myself behind the wall until the *cortège* had passed by, ashamed of being seen issuing from the dwelling of Madame Dubarri, although well aware that there was not one of those dainty courtiers, who now passed by with head averted and with eyes cast down, who had not thought it the greatest honour, but a short time before, to be admitted within the walls of that self-same Pavillon, which they seemed now to shun with such disdain. This circumstance would be

too trifling to mention, were it not for the *moral* it contains; finer, because *true*, than all those which flourish just above the vignette at the close of the "*Contes Moraux*" of Marmontel, or those "*dédiés à la Jeunesse*" by Madame de Genlis.'

"M. de Talleyrand paused, with that peculiar smile on his countenance which those who live in his intimacy, know so well, as being meant to fill the place of some satirical trait which he does not choose to utter at the time, but which is not wholly lost notwithstanding.

"'Yes, this was the last time I ever beheld the Comtesse Dubarri, *ex-maîtresse en titre*. As for d'Aiguillon, so enchanted did he seem with his new acquaintance, that, from that day forward, he spent a great portion of his time at the Pavillon; and, when I rallied him upon the attraction which seemed so irresistible, and reminded him of Ninon de L'Enclos and Diane de Poitiers, he shrugged his shoulders, and answered me with the greatest coolness—"*Que voulez-vous, mon cher?* where on earth could I go to get such exquisite Tokay as that which the old fool, King Casimir, sent as a present to Louis XIV.?" By this I judged, when his absences became less frequent, that the Tokay

was drawing to a close, and when they ceased altogether, that it had totally disappeared. *Autre moralité!* as dear old Perrault has it at the end of his fairy tales.'

"The prince paused again more thoughtfully, and added, 'Alas! it makes one's heart ache to remember the sad fate which befel both of those gay, light-hearted individuals. The one died upon the scaffold for having sold her jewels (the jewels she had shewn me with such pride as the gifts of poor dear "France") to send the money which the sale produced to the *émigré noblesse*—that *noblesse* who had treated her with such scorn—with such contempt! The other met a death more frightful still—the gay, the witty, the high-born d'Aiguillon fled to Holland, and perished there, they say, of misery and *starvation!*'

"This souvenir of Madame Dubarri," said C., "forms one of the prince's favourite *nouvelles de boudoir*, as he gracefully calls these fugitive anecdotes with which his memory is stored. I have observed that, from his youth upwards, his heart has ever softened towards the fair sex. I never heard him speak disparagingly of any woman, not even of those who, he is aware, have done him ill

offices; while he is ever ready to allow that he owed much of his success in early life to the kindness and protection of his female friends. They alone had tact and penetration enough to discover the future influence of the Abbé de Perigord; while their 'lords and masters' beheld in him nothing more than the blind tool of an insane and furious party. Madame de Staël, who was his first conspicuous protectress, inspired, notwithstanding this, far less gratitude in the mind of her *protegé* than the humble confederate with whom she leagued to obtain his pardon and recall, Madame de la Bouchardie. You will smile when I tell you, that even to this hour he cannot speak of this charming woman without emotion. I myself have heard his voice falter when he has mentioned her name. He loves to talk of her with those who still remember the matchless graces of her person, the exquisite sensibility and goodness of her heart.

"I shall never forget the reply he made one day to my foolish *banal* question of 'What kind of person was she?'

"'You could no more understand what *kind* of person she was,' he replied, with a contemptuous smile, 'than *I* can comprehend the admiration you

bestow upon the poor, vapid puppets with which your modern drawing-rooms are filled, or the influence you allow to the female *bourgeoise*, the wives and daughters of your bankers, and your *agents de change*, who, if admitted at all to the *salons* of the aristocracy of my day, would not occupy, as they now do, the high places, but those afar off, nearest the door. Any endeavour to make you understand the peculiar fascination of Madame de la Bouchardie would be useless; for you, in your generation, cannot have seen the like. She belonged to that class of women that followed the downfall of the monarchy, whose manners and habits were far different from those of the charming marquises of the *ancien régime*, and were, perhaps, even more charming still. Born amid strife and contention, daughters of the revolution, their part was to calm excitement, to soothe the angry passions which had been aroused, and well did they fulfil their gentle destiny. History will preserve the names of Madame Beauharnais, of Madame Tallien, of Madame Hamelin, not so much for their talents and courage as for their gentleness and influence in turning aside wrath, and saving the weak from the fury of the strong.'

"It is pleasant to listen to the praises of this fair and gentle creature from the lips of M. de Talleyrand, mingled as they are with the expression of the gratitude which time has not yet diminished towards her. The only *romantic* incident in the whole life of the prince is connected with Madame de la Bouchardie, and there lies, perhaps, the secret of the tenderness with which he remembers her; while the gratitude which he is *compelled* to feel towards her proud rival, Madame de Staël, has left him cold and unimpassioned. The latter, who, by her own confession, envied the grace she could not imitate, was bound by the ties of friendship to Madame de la Bouchardie, and disdained not to make use of her influence when occasion required; and often was her *amour-propre* severely wounded to find that those in power, who had been proof against her own blandishments, yielded at once, with scarcely an effort at resistance, to the wondrous fascination of Madame de la Bouchardie. The comtesse occupied at that time a small hotel, not far from the site of the Bastille, and here she sought to live in retirement; but this was soon discovered to be no easy matter for one whose name had already been immortalized

in some of the most glowing verses in the language, and her *salon* soon became the rendezvous of all the wit and talent of the capital.

"The young General Buonaparte was one of her most ardent admirers; 'tis even said that she had precedence of Josephine Beauharnais in his affections. Her answer to his proposal of marriage is well known, and proves that she already felt a presentiment of his future greatness. 'No, general, you will advance too far for one like myself, who loves to remain stationary.'

"Joseph Chénier, the poet, the dramatist, the ardent republican, had also laid his talents and his triumphs at her feet, and it was upon his influence that Madame de Staël had reckoned to obtain the recall from exile of M. de Talleyrand. It was a work of time and patience, and required all the power of the one, all the more powerful weakness of the other, to obtain even so much as a hearing for their bold demand. At length, the fair Eugénie had recourse to a graceful expedient, which had more effect than all the philosophical reasonings of her learned friend. It was the custom of Chénier to spend his evenings at the little Hôtel d'Esparda, and there, in the society of the comtesse and Co-

rinne, after a day spent in toil and strife, amid the loud uproar of the tribune, or the furious declamation of the club, would he love to *retremper son âme* and imbibe fresh inspiration for the composition of those splendid odes with which he has enriched our language. He was accompanied in these visits by his little dog, Stella, which had been a present from the comtesse, and knew her well. The little animal was in the habit of running on before her master to the hotel, where she would bark and scratch for the porter to open the gate, so that her master might not be kept waiting. Madame de la Bouchardie was aware of this, and, every evening, at the well-known signal which announced the approach of Chénier, she would seat herself at the harp and begin to sing the beautiful touching ballad of *Le Proscrit*. Her voice was most splendid, and she possessed great talent as a composer, having herself set to music many of those exquisite ballads written by Chénier's brother, André.

" This was the sure way to reach the poet's soul. She well knew that he stood without and listened to the end, not daring to enter while the fascination lasted. When at length the ballad was concluded,

and Madame de la Bouchardie had risen from the instrument, she was sure to behold Chénier standing on the threshold, leaning against the doorway, with saddened countenance, and tears glistening in his eyes. It was then, while still beneath the spell of that heavenly strain, that he was greeted with the words, which must at such a moment have sunk deep into his heart: 'Dear Joseph, what has been done to-day for M. de Talleyrand?' For some time the devoted friends had to sustain discouraging refusals or embarrassed excuses on the part of Chénier, but the stern principles of the republican yielded at last to the generous perseverance of the comtesse, and one evening he was enabled to answer the accustomed question by the information that the Convention had consented to listen to the justification of citizen Maurice, and that he himself was appointed to plead the cause of the exile on the morrow. The whole evening was spent by the three friends in fixing what should be said, what arguments used, to move the pity of his listeners, most of whom were disposed against the measure which he was about to propose. The night passed away in the amicable discussion; so anxious were the trio not to lose a single advan-

tage of argument which could be given in Chénier's speech.

"The keen wit of Madame de Staël and the fiery energy of Chénier were for ever coming in contact, and causing the whole fabric of the poet's intended *plaidoyer* to fall to the ground, after it had been raised with so much care and pains. Sometimes the gentle spirit of Eugénie would suggest some conciliatory word which would flatter the irritable self-love of both her friends and soothe their wounded vanity, and again they would go on smoothly with their task until fresh cause of difference arose, and Eugénie was again appealed to. It was thus that, with these petty causes of delay, morning had arrived and no speech was prepared, and Chénier went forth to the tribune disheartened and discouraged at the unwonted sterility of his imagination, dreading, after all, that his own want of eloquence might cause the appeal in favour of M. de Talleyrand to be rejected by the assembly. He found the indefatigable friends already arrived, and waiting in the ante-room. Madame de Staël submitted to his judgment several new reasonings which had entered her mind since he had left her, but they found poor Chénier still cold and unin-

spired; and, as he turned to enter the *salle* where the members of the Convention were fast assembling, he said, in despair, 'Pray for me, for I need it; I fear that I shall have no success in this cause, though you have made it yours.'

"Madame de la Bouchardie approached and laid her hand upon his arm. She looked up into the face of the poet with a countenance bathed in tears. Chénier tried to tear himself away, but she still detained him, and, in a low, tremulous voice, fearful of being overheard by those beyond the door, she sang the opening couplet of the ballad which had first roused him to exertion for the sake of the exile. She saw by his heightened colour and his quivering lip that he was moved, and, as she proceeded with the song, her own emotion became more painful still. Just as she concluded, the bell, which summoned the assembly to silence and attention, was heard, and Chénier rushed into the hall with that powerful emotion still upon his soul. Before the last strain uttered by those sweet tones had died upon his ear, he had mounted the tribune, and without forethought, without preparation, gave utterance, in impassioned language, to one of the most brilliant appeals which had ever

been pronounced before that stern, unpitying senate. Enthusiasm was roused; the motion, supported by Legendre and Boissy, was carried without a murmur, and citizen Maurice was declared free to return to France whenever it might suit his own pleasure. Madame de Staël, by her interest with Barras, certainly forwarded the measure, and she has reaped the fame, while Madame de la Bouchardie has gathered all the gratitude.

"The first visit of M. de Talleyrand on his arrival in Paris, was, of course, to Chénier, and it was agreed between them that they would proceed together that same evening to the little Hôtel d'Esparda, which no longer echoed with the prayers and lamentations of the two fair *solliciteuses*, but had once more resumed its tone of gaiety and *insouciance* ever since the successful termination of their efforts in favour of their absent friend. Chénier entered the drawing-room alone, requesting M. de Talleyrand to remain for a moment in the shadow of the doorway. By a little artifice he led the conversation to the subject of the exile, and both Madame de Staël and her friend expressed anxiety and surprise that he had not yet arrived from Berlin. They complained of this delay, reproach-

ing him with coldness and ingratitude in thus remaining so long in voluntary banishment.

"'Were he to hear your ballad of the "Proscrit," it would hurry his return,' said Chénier to Madame de la Bouchardie, at the same time taking her by the hand, and leading her to the harp, and Eugénie, although declaring that the song was a *pièce de circonstance* and out of date, yielded to his entreaty that she would sing it; and, finding inspiration in the remembrances which the music called up, she gave it with all the impassioned energy which had before roused the soul of her lover to pursue with such unwearied perseverance the cause he had himself at first condemned. While she was singing, M. de Talleyrand had drawn near unperceived, and when her hand fell to her side at the conclusion of the *ritournelle*, he seized it in a transport of delight, and imprinted on those fairy fingers a fervent kiss of gratitude. The loud shriek of surprise uttered by Madame de la Bouchardie roused Madame de Staël from the reverie into which the melody of the voice of her friend never failed to plunge her. In an instant, the arms of both ladies, with the true republican *sans gêne* of the day, were around the neck of the happy 'Pro-

scrit,' and while Madame de Staël expressed with fluency all the joy she felt at again beholding him, the Comtesse de la Bouchardie shed tears of happiness, more eloquent in their silence than all the florid declamations of her friend. It would enchant you to hear the prince describe that scene, the mixture of the burlesque and the pathetic which he can paint so well."

"What became of Madame de la Bouchardie?" said I. "Her name is never mentioned in the annals of that time, and yet it seems difficult to suppose that she could have sunk so completely into obscurity as to have left no trace. The friend of Buonaparte and Talleyrand, the mistress of Chénier, the companion of Corinne, must of necessity have been a personage of note, not a mere *comparse* to occupy the back of the stage."

"Alas! you should not have asked me this," said C., mournfully. "It seems as if a curse hung over all that was fair and virtuous at that stormy time. There is a tale connected with Madame de la Bouchardie, of such frightful injustice, of such base ingratitude, that it would harrow up your soul were I to tell it. At Chénier's death, she went to live on her estate, but was brought back to Paris,

some few years ago, a confirmed, incurable lunatic. When the prince seems overcome by sadness, and calls for his carriage before the hour at which he is accustomed to take his daily drive, I know almost by instinct that Dr. E. has been closeted with him for some time—and I can easily guess who has formed the melancholy subject of their conference."

CHAPTER II.

THE ABBÉ CERUTTI.

"THE sudden change from the frivolous *papillotage* of the *ancien régime* to the sombre enthusiasm which broke out at the epoch of the American war, made but little impression on M de Talleyrand. He was evidently prepared, and at once declared his opinion, not by pamphlets or inflammatory speeches, but by an argument far more forcible than either. Conjointly with his friend, the Count Choiseul Gouffier, he equipped a privateer, which he called the 'Holy Cause,' and which left the harbour of Brest in the month of May, 1779. The Duc de Castries, then minister of marine, furnished the guns. This single fact would almost serve to paint the time. A vessel of war armed and equipped by the *agent général du*

clergé de France, aided by a *savant* of the *haute noblesse,* and countenanced by one of the ministers, exhibits at once the utter confusion of ideas which must have existed just then.

"I have heard that the privateer, which, placed under command of a runaway scion of nobility, was to have carried death and destruction among the English merchant ships trading from the West Indies, never more made its appearance on the French coast. Be this as it may, I know that the prince does not like to talk of this little episode in his life, and the other day, when questioned rather closely upon the subject, he answered, '*Laissons cela, c'est un de mes péchés de jeunesse.*'

"One of the most curious documents in the world, and which I hope will be preserved in the prince's memoirs, must be his answer to the letter of Pope Benedict XIV. His holiness had thought fit to pass censure upon the warlike demonstration of the Abbé de Perigord, and the Abbé de Perigord had excused himself in a reply so full of wit and eloquence, so full of instances taken from the history of every country, that the good-natured prelate fairly owned himself vanquished, and withdrew, with much grace and frankness, from the

contest. This I think is the first action by which the Abbé de Perigord publicly displayed his adherence to the new principles, and separated himself in opinion from the *haute clergé* and the *haute noblesse*, who all, with scarcely an exception, were loud in their disapprobation of the unjust and unjustifiable interference of France in the quarrel between Great Britain and her rebellious colony. The step was considered in the light of a secession from the society of which he was a member, both by his lofty birth and holy profession; and many and many a prognostic was now beginning to be drawn of his future eminence or his approaching degradation, according to the mind which judged him.

"It was during the few years which elapsed between this period, and the events of 1789, that M. de Talleyrand first became acquainted with the Abbé Cerutti, the friend and colleague of Mirabeau, and that, together with them, he laid the foundation of the very first popular journal ever published in France. The design was spirited and bold; it was addressed to the inhabitants of the distant provinces of the kingdom; and, immediately on its appearance, obtained a success hitherto unrivalled in this species of literature.

"It has been falsely accused of having excited many of the atrocities of the Revolution. It did not appear until the flames had spread, and could no longer be repressed, and he who now turns to the *Feuille Villageoise*, will recognise at once, amid the burning columns from the pen of Mirabeau, and the cold, bitter irony of Cerutti, the calm reflective genius of Talleyrand, in those articles on the Division of Church Property—on the Improvements in National Education—on the Abuse of Power—on the Unity of Weights and Measures—which served to act as soothing balsam to the irritation produced by the fiery appeals of his more impassioned colleagues.

"He puts forth, in these addresses to the people, the promulgation of which has been deemed so criminal, nothing which he had not said before—not a single word of which he does not retain the most powerful conviction, ay, even to this very hour. Some of them might be quoted as models of reasoning and eloquence, although failing in the refinement of style and diction, which can only be acquired by that early familiarity with the classics, the want of which he has lamented all his life.

"Cerutti was a man gifted with the most splen-

did talents. His peculiar position claimed, perhaps, undue attention, from the very moment when he first appeared upon the revolutionary horizon. The reception of this champion of the people was most enthusiastic. Wherever he went, he was followed by an admiring crowd—every public meeting resounded with his praise—streets were called after his name; in short, he tasted every gratification of *amour propre* arising from popularity. But Cerutti was a misanthrope, and, far from seeking distinction, he shrank with disgust from publicity. The canker-worm was at his heart, and I have heard M. de Talleyrand declare that, during the whole time their intimacy lasted, he never once beheld him smile. His was another of those anomalous existences created by the revolution. A gentleman, bred in indolence, yet adopting the obligations and active vigilance of a Jesuit; then becoming even a priest, the better to defend the cause of his beloved order; chosen as the private counsellor and friend of the dauphin (father of Louis Seize), and then suddenly—without pause, without gradation,—plunging headlong into the delirium of democracy.

"It is singular that the cause of this unnatural

course of events should never have been thoroughly investigated by any of the historians of the time, who all seem to agree in passing over without comment the motives which actuated Cerutti, or else in declaring them either altogether inscrutable or the instigations of insanity. The close observer of the human heart can, however, at once discern the existence of some secret spring of action, some powerful incentive to this inconsistency, and will not remain satisfied with the abuse heaped upon poor Cerutti by the Abbé Georgel, the wordy historian of the diamond necklace, defender, *coûte que coûte*, of Louis de Rohan; nor yet with the light indifference with which he is mentioned by another author, who describes him in these words—'A man of some capacity both as an orator and writer, but whose career was too short to allow him to display that ability in government which he seemed confident of possessing. He was of a sombre and taciturn character, which, combined with his almost total deafness, rendered him of difficult access. 'Tis said that the hopeless passion he had conceived for one of the ladies of the court brought on paralysis, which occasioned his infirmity, and ultimately ended in his death.'

"I have heard the history of Cerutti from M. de Talleyrand himself, and it forms one of the most extraordinary episodes of this extraordinary time. The prince related to me that, one evening after their work was over, the three *collaborateurs* of the *Feuille Villageoise*, led on by the very nature of the composition upon which they had been engaged, began to talk of the events of their past lives, and of the various causes which had led to the desertion of caste, of which all three had been guilty. What a glorious study would it have been for the moralist, to have listened to those dark histories, as told by those three fiery spirits, each the hero of his own bitter tale. One can imagine all the hatred and the scorn of Mirabeau, as he related the circumstances of his youth of strife and misery; of his manhood, crushed and blighted by his father's unjust tyranny; his burning satire and his bitter scoffing must have been terrific. Then came the calm, deep mockery of Talleyrand; *his* history of neglect and injustice must have been more frightful still. Three mighty souls were they, rising in condemnation of the country and the times in which they had thus been spurned and persecuted.

"Every one knows the history of Mirabeau's long imprisonment and harsh treatment, and I have already told you the events which marked the youth of Talleyrand; but the story of Cerutti is known only to the few with whom he was most intimate, and is, perhaps, more illustrative of the spirit of the times than that of either of his friends. The man's career was short, and very like the flash which precedes the tempest—everything, while he was on the stage moving before the public eye—nothing, so soon as his part was over and the curtain dropped. He died and left nought behind to save him from oblivion—not even the memory of the manner in which he had performed his character, and in which he had been so much applauded.

"His father was a wealthy silk-grower in the environs of Turin, and his childhood was passed amid the shady groves, which stretched for miles around the château where his family resided. His younger brother had taken to books and learning, and had been appointed to accompany the young Count Hercules V—— on his travels; while Joseph Cerutti, the eldest of the family, remained at home to assist his father in the direction of his fortune and the improvement of the estate. His life was

that of an Italian gentleman of the middle class at the time—that is to say, his studies were neither very deep nor his occupations very grave, and his days passed pleasantly enough in the exercise of small practices of piety, the cultivation of small adventures of gallantry, very little reading, and great indulgence in the *dolce far niente;* added to which, he was compelled to superintend the progress of the silkworms, which formed the whole wealth of the father and the patrimony of his sons. But this occupation was far from being sufficiently interesting to rouse him from the dream in which he lived, and in which his days might all have passed, had it not been for the one event which, sooner or later, will turn the tide of all men's lives, making the hitherto troubled sea of existence at once calm and placid, or changing its smooth surface into a raging hell.

"Count Hercules V—— returned from Rome, whither he had been journeying with young Cesario Cerutti, the brother of our hero. The estate of the noble family of V—— joined that of the Cerutti, and from the friendship which existed between the young nobleman and the companion of his studies, sprung an intimacy between the two

families, which was at variance with the Italian habits of the period, wherein distinctions and caste were more respected than in any other country in Europe.

"'I was struck,' said the Abbé Cerutti, as he told the story to his fellow-labourers, 'with the change which a few months had made in the habits and temper of my brother Cesario. He had left us full of the enthusiasm and spirit natural to his age; he had returned taciturn and reserved in speech, gloomy and abstracted in manner. He seemed to have a weight of care and misery upon his mind, which neither the affectionate attentions of his family nor the fondness of his mother, to whom he was devotedly attached, could succeed in shaking off. I observed that he was for ever seeking me, and requesting me to converse in private with him, as though he had something of moment to communicate; and then he would suddenly check himself, and talk of light matters, so much in contrast with the mournful tone of his voice and the gloom upon his brow, that the contemplation was most painful. But I dared not question him concerning the cause of this change in his disposition, fearing to exasperate him, in the

irritable mood in which he was. One day, when he seemed more communicative than usual, I sought to enliven our conversation by endeavouring to extort from him some little narrative of his journey to Rome, concerning which he had hitherto observed an unnatural silence.

"'He said he had been happy, very happy with Count Hercules (and yet he shuddered as he spoke the words,) and the kindness of the good Abbé Giordoni, the young Count's preceptor, had so mingled pleasure with study, that the time had passed away swiftly and pleasantly as in a charmed dream. Why then did he gaze upon me with that strange expression in his eye? I could not resist the impulse which prompted me to seize the opportunity of seeking to discover the cause of his melancholy, and said, as I pressed his hand with affection, "Dearest Cesario, do not suffer the secret which hangs so heavy on your soul to crush you thus beneath its ponderous weight. Confide in me, my brother. What is it has disturbed your happiness, and thus changed your very nature?"

"'You are deceived,' replied Cesario, hastily, and with a kind of convulsive laugh; 'I never was more happy or in better spirits than at this moment.

Come with me this evening to the Villa V——, and see if it be not as I tell you. By-the-bye, I had forgotten to mention, that the whole family at the villa are anxious to welcome you, the old count and his son, and the abbé, and—and—(he hesitated)—in short, the whole of them will be glad to see you. So come to-night—yes, to-night—'tis time !'

"'His head sank upon his bosom as he concluded, and he once more relapsed into his abstracted musing. I made no observation regarding the singular forgetfulness of which he had been guilty, nor of the want of attention on the part of the V—— family, in not inviting me themselves to the villa, but seized with avidity upon the opportunity thus afforded of penetrating the secret of my brother's altered demeanour. I already knew Count Hercules, a studious and pious youth, who was considered a pattern for the whole country. I had also frequently seen the Abbé Giordoni, the preceptor, towards whom I felt an instinctive aversion, although railed at by my friends for my too great facility, in "taking dislikes;" but there yet remained one member of the V—— family whom I had not yet beheld, and a sudden conviction seized my mind, that she was the cause of my brother's

misery, and that it was her name at which he had hesitated in his speech to me. I was therefore determined to watch every look, to listen to every word, which should pass between the pair, and to base my counsels to my brother upon what I should observe.

" ' At the hour appointed, we set forth to pay our evening visit at the villa. The gloom and pre-occupation of my brother increased as we drew near to our destination, and I began to doubt if such would have been the bearing of an impassioned expectant lover.

" ' We entered the great saloon unannounced. Cesario was free and intimate as a *fils de la maison*. The room was large, and dimly lighted by the shaded lamp upon the mantelpiece. The old count was buried in a slumber in his large arm-chair, and his grey head stood out from the fauteuil, calm and peaceful, the very emblem of contented and respectable old age. Not so was the expression of the individual who was seated near, and upon whom the light of the lamp fell, as if on purpose to light up the shadow which was passing at the very moment over his countenance—a very gleam of hell! It was the Abbé Giordoni, who was seated at the

small table, ostensibly playing chess with the young Count Hercules—that is to say, the chess-board was placed between them, and the chess-men stood upright upon the board; but I instantly perceived that not one single piece had been disturbed from its primitive position, and it was evident that their occupation was of far more import, for the young man sat pale and trembling before the abbé, whose infuriated countenance and vehement gesture plainly bespoke the violence of the discussion in which he had been engaged, although I could not judge of its nature, from the low tone in which it had been carried on, doubtless through fear of disturbing the poor old count, who slumbered on, little dreaming of the storm of hate and passion which had been conjured up close at his very ear.

" 'Our entrance disturbed the conversation, and I was painfully struck with the eagerness of welcome with which Count Hercules rushed forward to greet my brother; and which, considering that he had already seen him in the morning, and that almost every day since his return had been spent in his company, seemed forced and unnatural. He started from his chair, upsetting the table and the chess-board in his haste, and throwing his arms

around my brother's neck, he exclaimed, faintly, "God be praised, you are come at last, Cesario!"

"'The abbé,' meanwhile, advanced towards me with ecclesiastical grace and dignity. I ought at once to have suspected the man who could so easily replace the expression of rage which his features wore when I entered, by the smile of intense delight with which he held forth his hand to me, uttering, by a singular coincidence, almost the very words which Count Hercules had whispered to my brother, "*Eccolo alfin—questo caro amico.*"

"'I ought to have suspected such heartiness of welcome from one who had displayed hitherto no stronger feeling towards me than that of common courtesy, whenever by chance we had met, which was but seldom, in our walks and drives around the neighbourhood. I could understand such warmth of greeting between the two young friends, but was sorely puzzled to discover by what right and title *I* was admitted to share in such strong demonstrations of friendship. However, any feeling of astonishment which I might have experienced was soon forgotten in the courteous reception which I met with from the old count, who, thus rudely roused from slumber, by the falling of the table and the upset-

ting of the chess-men, rose to meet us with all the frank politeness which has ever distinguished the Piedmontese gentlemen of the old school, and completely put me at my ease, by immediately entering upon the subject which he knew would be most interesting to me, the improvement of my father's land, and the culture of our mulberry-grounds. The two young men were soon engaged in deep and earnest conversation together, and the Abbé Giordoni shaded his eyes with his hand and attentively watched them both.

" ' The evening passed pleasantly enough, but I thought of little beside the young countess, whom I had not yet seen, and, when the door opened slowly and she was announced, my heart beat so violently, for my brother's sake, that any one who had witnessed my emotion, would have imagined that I was already deeply in love with her myself. She entered without embarrassment, notwithstanding the presence of the strangers whom she found assembled in the saloon, and whom she had not expected to meet there, went up to her father, and kissed him on the forehead, and then turning to us, saluted us gracefully. I was struck with her extreme beauty, and at the first glance felt

sure that my suspicions were right, and that Cesario was enslaved; but presently all my suspicions fell to the ground; for, as soon as she caught his eye, she stepped lightly across the floor, and accosted him easily and with grace, but with the happy calm of perfect indifference; while he, although roused for an instant by the duties of courtesy, having bowed politely, sank backward in the fauteuil from which he had risen on her entrance, without a word —without a glance, for I watched him narrowly— and resumed the conversation with Count Hercules, which had been interrupted on her entrance.

" 'I was fairly puzzled by this unexpected *denoûment* to the intrigue I had been at so much pains to invent. It was in vain that I sought to detect the slightest intelligence between them— there was none. The young girl seemed engrossed during supper by her attentions to her father, and scarcely raised her eyes towards any of us, save in the courtesy which she might consider to be due from the hostess to her guests; whilst my brother, whose seat at table was immediately opposite to hers, never once even glanced towards her. I left the villa that night full of strange feelings, and from that hour my existence was changed.

"'How *can* I tell you, my friends, how it became so? I know not myself, save that a web was spun around me, from which I am not free at this very hour! There seemed, from the very first, an overstrained demonstration of attachment towards me, and absolute *appropriation* of my time and of my actions, nay, my very thoughts were no more my own. The Abbé Giordoni was never absent from my side, and, what seemed stranger still, he was acquainted with the most minute secrets of our existence—the value of our land—the produce of our plantations—the revenue which we drew from the silkworms; he even knew of the circumstances of the loan which we had been compelled to raise a few years before, and which, as we thought, had been kept a profound mystery between ourselves and the party of whom the money had been borrowed. I have lain awake whole nights to discover how this could be, and yet could not compass the mystery. I cannot tell you how much this circumstance preyed upon my spirit, for Heaven had gifted me with an independent soul, and an utter abhorrence of control, and the invisible fetters with which I felt myself manacled became more and more galling as I grew more determined to be free.

"'It was on the occasion of my father's death that I felt this most of all. The abbé took upon himself, unsolicited and unapproved, the whole management of our affairs. He it was who arranged the retirement of our mother to the neighbouring convent of the Annunciata, to which I most decidedly objected; but my opinion in this, as well as in everything else, was entirely overruled by that of the abbé. The next occurrence in the family, which gave me the strangest trouble and perplexity, was the determination of Cesario to sell the portion of the estate which had become his by my father's will; and my amazement was increased tenfold upon learning who was the purchaser—it was the Abbé Giordoni. I was angry with my brother, and reproached him bitterly, but he replied, in a despairing voice, and with the tears flowing from his eyes, "What could I do? The land was needed by the good abbé!'

"'My God, what could be the meaning of all this? How came it that this man had thus obtained such influence? Day by day did it increase and grow more irksome, still drawing, as it were, a charmed circle round my very existence, diminishing in circumference until it had grown so small

that I could not even turn without feeling wounded by its pressure; every day and every hour drew the coils yet closer. It was then that I ended where I ought to have begun, and set myself earnestly to work to examine the character of the man, who had, in spite of me, gained such ascendancy over my family. To my great astonishment, I found him a man of the keenest wit and most consummate knowledge of the world, whose practical learning and experience were universal, whose energy and perseverance were dauntless. I soon discovered, with a feeling of terror which I cannot describe, that he had fathomed my character with as much accuracy as though I had lived with him from my youth upwards. He *knew* of my scorn and hatred of restraint, and therefore had used none. He *knew* that I was of a proud and melancholy temperament, and therefore had never roused my ire by opposition. I felt a bitter contempt for myself, when I found that in all things it was his system to *humour* me. The hour came at last, however, for the unravelling of all the mystery.

"'One day, Giordoni came to me with busy and important looks, and with a hurried air, to consult

me upon the plan of a building he was about to erect upon the ground which he had bought of Cesario. It was within view of the windows of my own château, and therefore it was the act of a friend to consult me upon the form and fashion of its structure, and, as in duty bound, I thanked him heartily for the kind attention.

"'It was a chapel to Saint Ignatius which he was about to erect, "*en attendant* the convent," he added, with a smile bland and affable, "which it was his intention to found when he should grow richer." The dedication startled me.

"'Not a convent of Jesuits?' said I, faintly, for I had imbibed a share of the popular hatred, which, just at that time, the Order had inspired throughout the whole of Europe.

"'The abbé smiled again, yet more peaceably than before. "Pardon me," replied he, in a gentle tone, "our Order has need of a station in this part of the country. We are poorly represented, my friend, observe—" and he drew forth his memorandum-book, "from Saint Tomaso to Mabli, eight leagues, from Mabli to this place, seventeen; it is too far."

"'The secret then was out; the whole mystery

of the man, his perseverance and his patience, his confidence in himself, his utter contempt of me. He was a Jesuit—an active, busy, meddling Jesuit—one who held a degree in the Order—one who had command and authority, and could bid any of his underlings, slaves to his will, who was himself a slave, do his pleasure at the moment and without a murmur, even though the order should have been to murder his best friend, or betray to death his own mother; who himself durst not hesitate in the commission of any crime, provided it were done for the honour and advancement of the "Blessed Order of Jesus!"

"'I am now convinced that, natural and simple as this avowal then appeared, it had been prepared *de longue main*, and that much was at that very moment depending upon the manner in which it would be received by me. He managed well, however, in hiding the emotion which my startled manner and my exclamations of surprise and displeasure must have occasioned him, and launched forth at once, with graceful eloquence, upon the advantages of the Order of Jesus over all others—the power, the influence, which the meanest member of the "Society" possessed over every individual

within his sphere. He said that the confidence and strength of the association were so great, that nought could resist its influence. He showed me on the map how its ramifications had spread throughout Europe, until they had enveloped every civilized country as in a web, from which it was impossible to get free, and, when he had concluded, he took me out to inspect the workmen at the chapel, and to view the new plantation which he had commenced. I beheld it indeed, and with a sad presentiment remarked that the avenues of lime-trees, which were already laid down, were all turned in the direction of my own château. I scarcely knew what it was that I dreaded, and yet felt a certainty of coming evil which completely overpowered every faculty.

"'You will smile at the determination which I took that very night—you will say that it was that of a school-boy—a coward—but you cannot know the terror which pervaded the population of our country at that very period, on account of the subtlety of the Jesuits. It had become the bugbear of society. The feeling had been nursed by the secret enemies of the Order, sent from France, where its dissolution had already been decreed in the boudoirs of Trianon, by the vindictive hatred of Madame de

Pompadour. I determined, then, to flee—to leave my property in the hands of the agent, and to travel for a while, until the power of the serpent which was thus gaining ground upon me was weakened, or that I felt myself strong enough to encounter its cold and slimy coils without fear. I passed several days in making my preparations for the journey I meant to take, and confided my intentions to no one on earth save the overseer of the estate in whose hands I was about to place my interests. Cesario was absent. I would not even venture to write to him until I had set forth, for my terror of betrayal had grown so puerile that I even feared the letter might be opened!

"'Everything was ready for my departure. The agent, a plain, honest man, had sworn to be as secret as the grave, and when, one evening, I took my leave of the eternal Giordoni, who now passed not a single day without paying me his lengthened visit, I laughed at his form of farewell. "*A demain, à demain!*" called he from the gate; "to-morrow we will talk about the road from your grounds to my chapel—there *must* be a road, Cerutti—the high wall must come down. What need of walls between such friends as we?"

"'I laughed as I pressed his hand in feigned

warmth, echoing his portentous words of adieu. I knew that on the morrow I should be far enough away. He smiled likewise as he exclaimed, once more looking me earnestly in the face, " Farewell, my friend, my dearest friend, *à demain donc, à demain!*"

" ' He turned, and I watched his retreating form gradually fade in the moonlight, with a heart bounding with gratitude and joy at the prospect of my approaching deliverance. The horses were waiting on the by-road by the side of the château, and I could hear their joyous neigh from the gate where I was leaning to gaze after Giordoni. Everything seemed to breathe of peace and happiness. There was a nightingale perched among the branches of the mulberry-tree beneath which I stood, and her joyous melody gushed forth unsubdued, more free and unconstrained methought when the shadow of Giordoni no longer darkened the pathway; multitudes of the bright green glow-worms peculiar to the summer nights of our country, were chasing each other over the smooth turf. I thought I had never beheld a night of such calm, such placid beauty.

" ' I was like the schoolboy about to escape the

dominion of his pedagogue; eager to be free, yet scarcely as yet decided on the use that he would make of his long-coveted liberty. I had many plans in view, but none as yet decided.

"'I will go from hence to Lyons,' said I to myself, as I returned with light step towards the house; 'there will I remain for a while, to study the manners of the people of whom I have heard so much; then on—on to Paris; 'tis there and there alone "*qu'on trouve le génie si on n'en a pas.*" I could scarcely contain my feelings at the thought of the change which by my own address and discretion I was about to work in my destiny, and I whistled and sang aloud in glee at the bare thought of so much happiness.

"'No more slavery, no more espionnage, and—shall I own it, my friends?—no more fear of a cold and disdainful love! Yes, *there* was the secret of the discontented misery of the last few months of my existence. From the evening of my first visit at the villa of Count V——, I had become the slave of the fair Signora Isabella. Her disdain of my advances, her coldness, had served to increase my passion, but had changed its character. Hope had given way to defiance, defiance

to despair, yet still I loved, *and this was the reason why I wished to flee in secret* from the home where I was born, like a thief or an usurper—this it was that drove me forth to seek elsewhere the liberty I felt that I had lost—the repose which I so greatly needed. All these subjects for the future passed rapidly through my mind as I returned up the avenue. I had just gained the hall, I was ascending the steps which led to my apartment, when I was startled by the sound of footsteps close behind me. I was alarmed: I knew that the domestics had been all dismissed, and had long before retired from that part of the building, while the agent had my orders to await me with the horses. I turned in trepidation, my heart fluttered in my bosom, and my cheek grew pale as marble —it was *Giordoni who followed me!*

"'Such was the state of abject fear in which I lived that, in the nervous agitation of the moment, I was about to confess my guilty design, and to sue for pardon; but there was neither anger nor suspicion upon the brow of the Jesuit, and it was with a calm and gracious smile that he spoke, as he held up before me a little billet which scented the air with the sweetest perfume.

"'See what a faithless messenger am I,' said he, shaking his head with a *bonhomie* quite paternal; 'I was commissioned to deliver this letter with great dispatch, and had well-nigh forgotten it altogether! 'Twas well I thought of it before I got home, for I know not how I might have been received had I returned without the answer.'

"'I was seized with sudden faintness as I mechanically unsealed the billet and gazed at the signature. It was from the demoiselle Isabella de V——, and, as I read the contents, my very soul gave way beneath the influence of the kindness and the *tender* tone it breathed.

"'Need I say that I departed not that night—that I even retired to rest *rejoicing* that I had been prevented from listening to the rash suggestions of my evil genius, for such I was soon taught to believe the secret warnings of my better reason, to which had I but hearkened then, I should have been saved a whole life of misery.

"'To you, who are both men of the world, there is no need to describe the sequel. Before three months had elapsed, I had become as fervent a proselyte to the principles which governed the "blessed Order" as Giordoni himself!—In three

months more, the land which my father had saved with so much care and pains, and which I myself had toiled so assiduously to improve, deeming it a heritage to descend to my children's children, was no longer my own; it belonged by promise to the holy society of Jesus, of whom I now was proud to sign myself a weak, unworthy member. During all this time I had lived in a dream—a delusion the more wild and stirring, inasmuch as I am of a cold and torpid character, requiring the most powerful emotions to rouse me from my apathy. I do not think that I ever reflected on the future. It was enough that the Contessa Isabella loved me. She told me so again and again, and each time that she had spoken the words, I had granted some concession of which I repented not, deeming no sacrifice too great to win that single smile which I had by this time learned to prize more highly than my fortune—than my very life—to deem more precious than my father's memory or my mother's love! I was roused from the trance into which I had fallen by a letter from my brother Cesario, which was put into my hand on my return home late one evening from the villa V——. It contained but few words, full of dark-

ness and mystery—the restraint of one labouring under the terror of discovery.

"'I have much to tell you,' wrote he; 'beware! you are deceived. I shall be with you to-night, but let it not be known. I wish to say but one word to you, and must depart again before dawn, without leaving the slightest trace of my visit. Let the gate at the bottom of the garden be left unlocked to-night, and, when all in the château have retired to rest, meet me by the tank close to the entrance. Hesitate not—I shall wait there till you come. You will find upon the first step of the reservoir a branch of the alder which grows there, which I will cut the moment I arrive, as a signal that I am waiting for you.'

"'I cannot describe to you the perplexity into which I was thrown by the contents of this letter—nor the anxiety with which I awaited the opportunity of complying with the request contained in it. It seemed as if that moment was destined never to arrive, so tediously did the evening pass—so slow did the domestics seem in their preparations for retiring to rest.

"'At length all was quiet in the château, and, with thanks to Heaven that it should at last be

so, I muffled myself in my cloak, and ventured forth. The night was dark; there were neither moon nor stars; but so impressed was I by the tone of mystery in which my brother wrote, that I did not even carry with me the lantern with which I had returned from the villa, and drove back with blows my faithful dog who had attempted to follow me as usual, lest his bark might alarm the servants. It was a calm, still night—not a whisper was heard among the trees, nor the movement of any living thing among the bushes which skirted the garden-path down which I passed, with beating heart, towards the tank. It was situated in a hollow at the bottom of the garden, and in a place well fitted for concealment, being embosomed in trees, and surrounded by a thick hedge in order to shade the water from the sun, so that, even in the heat of summer, the air always struck damp and chill to any one coming to it from the broad sunlit alleys of the garden.

"'At the end of the narrow path, so narrow that even two persons could not walk in it abreast, a flight of stone steps, always wet and slippery, reached to the edge of the reservoir, which, at certain seasons of the year, was extremely deep and

dangerous. I stood upon the steps, and endeavoured to penetrate the darkness, but I could discern nothing, save here and there the reflection in the water of some faint vapoury star, struggling to disperse the cloud which hung before it. I stooped and ran my hand along the stone. Cesario was already there—the branch of alder was laid where he had mentioned in his letter. I called in low whispers, 'Are you here, Cesario?' There was no answer—not a sound, save, just at the very moment, and almost as if in reply, the low, melancholy howling of the dog whom I had repulsed on leaving the château, and who had remained watching at the door! I walked round stealthily to the gate by which my brother must have entered—perhaps I should find him awaiting me there. But no, the gate was open—he *must* be in the garden. Again did I call, and again, and still the same silence, and so I fancied that he must have arrived early, and, tired of tarrying in the same spot, was wandering through the grounds, but would most assuredly return to the place where he had appointed me to meet him. I sat down on the steps of the reservoir, consoled with this reflection, and waited on.

"'Once or twice I fancied I heard footsteps approaching, and then I rose and paced in the direction whence I fancied the sound came. Then would I again call upon Cesario—again to meet with disappointment, and to sink once more upon the cold stone, in a paroxysm of anguish and impatience. By degrees, however, my ear became accustomed to the silence, and my eye to the utter darkness; and it happened with me then, as it has often done with others—my faculties became fatigued with watching and with listening, and I bent my head upon my knees, and fell into an unquiet slumber. I know not how long I remained thus, but when I awoke it was already dawn—the cold grey early dawn which precedes the rising of the sun. The birds were already twittering and chattering in the branches above my head, and old Volpe, the hound, whom I had beaten back on the night preceding, apparently set free by the opening of the door, was thrusting his cold nose into my hand, to attract my attention. I patted him kindly—he looked up into my face with an expression I shall never forget, and howled so very piteously that the sound thrilled to my very soul.

"'I rose from my seat—every limb was para-

lysed with cold — every joint stiffened by the uneasy posture which I had maintained so long. I walked to and fro for an instant, in order to dissipate the sensation of misery which I experienced, and reflected with vexation on the situation in which I had been compelled to pass the night. I could not help accusing Cesario of negligence and want of feeling, in thus leaving me to watch and wait in uncertainty for so many hours. I was about to move from the spot, when I know not what instinct prompted me to gaze around the place once more. I even looked over the hedge into the tank, and the dog ran hurriedly down the steps and stood at the bottom, whining in that sorrowful, uneasy tone, which expresses a sense of misery and danger with more power than any human language. I was attracted by the peculiar steadiness with which the animal stood looking towards the opposite side of the tank, and mechanically I suffered my gaze to wander in the same direction.

"'Suddenly the beating of my heart was stilled, my very respiration checked, and the cold perspiration oozed in large drops from my forehead, as though I had been standing beneath the heat of a

burning sun! There, beneath the leaden light of the misty dawn, I could distinctly see a human form lying at the water's-edge, still and motionless; the face was concealed, turned downwards from the light; but I *knew* that it was my brother, and with a shriek of agony I sprang forward to the spot, with frantic excitement tearing through the bushes which impeded my path. Before I had touched the body, I knew that life must be extinct. Not for a single moment did I labour under the puerile delusion so common to people in the like situation, but at once felt the certitude that my brother lay dead before me!

"'Death is at all times a ghastly spectacle, but there are hours and seasons wherein its presence inspires far less horror than at others; the bed of sickness—the darkened room—the lighted tapers—the priest murmuring consolation to the lingering soul—these are the natural attendants on death, and soften the disgust and dread that we feel at its approach. But here, in the full light of the rising dawn, the birds carolling amid the branches—the distant song of the merry vintagers who were already busy at their labours on the opposite hill—all seemed to jar upon the feelings, and to inspire

a supernatural horror, from which I am not free even now when thinking of that hour. I raised my brother in my arms. He had fallen forward from the bank, for his head was in the water, which circumstance I thought at first might have caused suffocation. The bank was steep and slippery, likely to have given way beneath his feet, and he must have been thus precipitated into the water, whence he could not extricate himself without help. This was my first impression, but, as I raised that lifeless form to the light, I perceived a deep and ghastly wound in his side, from which the blood had flowed, not freely, but in a thick, turbid pool, and, as it were, drop by drop! The knife with which the deed was done lay by his side upon the grass. I recognised it as his own—my father's gift to him when a boy—the very knife he must have used to cut the branch from the alder, as the signal of his arrival in the garden. Cesario had died thus, this miserable death, while I had been the whole night within sight of his dying struggles—within hearing of his dying groan, and yet had seen, had heard nothing—and when tired of cursing his tardiness, had sat me down and *slept* almost within arm's length of his bleeding corpse!

" ' The event caused the greatest consternation throughout the whole country. We were much beloved, for my father's sake, and every inquiry was set on foot which could lead to a discovery of the means by which Cesario had met his death. But every measure proved fruitless, and I was forced to console myself with the opinion of Giordoni, who expressed a conviction that my brother, giving way to the melancholy which so long had preyed upon his mind, had committed suicide. The letter I had received seemed to many, by its tone of mystery, to betray symptoms of the excitement which usually precedes the execution of such a deed. Cesario was the first person buried in the new chapel of Saint Ignatius, Giordoni generously consenting to give absolution for his crime, and to attribute its commission to insanity.

" ' As my destiny had begun, so did it proceed. The whole of my property was given up to the Order. I had been led on, step by step, by the hope of meeting with my reward—the hand of Isabella—she who had prevailed upon me to concede every point to Giordoni, by promises of eternal love. In the hopes she had held out, consisted now my only happiness, for I had no longer a future of my own.

Of the flourishing fortune which my father left me, I was permitted to claim but the share which fell to me as one of the meanest members of the "Society."

"'Even then I did not despair—for how could I imagine that I was to be deceived? How can I tell you all that followed—how the illusions, one by one, dropped from my vision, and left me as I am —without faith, without belief either in God or man!

"'I had for some time observed a change in Isabella—an embarrassment for which she herself, when taxed with it by me, would account by attributing it to the perpetual disputes and *tracasseries* which she had to endure with her father, concerning her attachment to me. The old count had long since forbidden all intercourse between us, but we had kept up an active correspondence, and obtained frequent interviews together by means of the Abbé Giordoni, and I was therefore justified in believing in her truth. Judge, then, of my despair, when told that the contessa, weary of the struggle she had to endure in her own home on my account, had resolved to retire to a convent, with the determination never to see or correspond with me until her father

should consent to our union! She well knew that this condition was equivalent to a total rupture. I had given up everything for her sake, and she now deserted me!

"'You, my friends, have both of you passed through the ordeal of passion, and can best judge of the storm of hate and rage which this conviction raised within my bosom—how in my bitterness I forswore her love, and cursed her very name! It was then that Giordoni came to my aid with his specious arguments and eloquent reasonings. He pointed out to me the utter nothingness of human love, and persuaded me to turn my energies into another channel, and, by taking priest's orders, to seek forgetfulness of my wrongs in satisfied ambition.

"'I was now, as I have told you, without resource, a blighted and a disappointed man; his proposition suited well with the state of feeling which I experienced at the time, and I accepted it without hesitation. I was actuated, in taking this step, by a sentiment of revenge, and was glad to prove to the faithless Isabella that I relied no longer on her *promises*—that I reckoned no longer on her love. You know how well and how truly I fulfilled

my office—how ardently I strove in the cause of the Jesuits—and how at Lyons I succeeded in my mission—and when the dauphin called me to be his counsellor and director, how indefatigably I strove to avert the evil day, which I felt was dawning for the "Society."

"'I worked in earnest, and spared neither toil nor anxiety in the fulfilment of my task. I might have persisted to this day, had it not been for a circumstance which changed the whole end and aim of my existence. I had not been long an inmate of Saint Cloud, when I received, from Turin, a packet from my agent, the man whom I had chosen to manage the estate when I was about to depart, to fly from the influence of Giordoni. He had written to me when at the point of death, and the torments of his conscience had instigated him to make a full confession of the deceptions of which I had been the victim, and in which he had been assisted by Giordoni. The Order of Jesus had long coveted the estate belonging to the Cerutti. The abbé had undertaken to acquire it. My unhappy brother, being of a religious turn, had fallen an easy victim.

"'Once a member of the order, his task was to

betray every word and action which passed in our family, to act as spy upon every proceeding in his father's house. It was his remorse at the part he was compelled to play, which had caused the bitter melancholy that had so distressed me in former years. He had been commissioned to draw me to the villa V——. This he had resisted, well knowing to what end I was to be attracted thither. My own desire had, however, served his vow of blind obedience; but, as he had proved himself a weak servant, he was dismissed in disgrace, and despatched to another station. The agent was chosen in his stead, and well did he execute his foul task. Not a look, not a thought of ours but what was written down and conveyed to Giordoni; not a letter but was opened, not a message but was reported. As you have seen, I fell an easy prey to the cunning of the Jesuit—the falsehood of the *Jesuitess*. The man, in his confession, went on to relate, with tears of repentance, he said, that he himself had stabbed Cesario, by "higher command." He had read the letter before delivering it to me, and the person "in command" had feared that our meeting would have marred all.

"'There was no further revelation; the name of

the person "in command" was withheld, but hypocritical still, even at the dying hour, the fellow ended abruptly by calling on me to offer up my prayers for the repose of his eternal soul. *My* prayers! he has my everlasting curses even in his grave.'

"M. de Talleyrand told me that Cerutti had grown so excited while relating the latter portion of his history, that the two friends desired him to desist, and to leave the recital till another time. It appears that, even with this dread secret on his mind, further misery was yet in reserve for Cerutti.

The Order of Jesus was tottering to its basis. Agents of the Society filled every court in Europe, in spite of the contumely cast upon them, most especially in France; yet was it there that they were most active in their manœuvres. By a fatality, which, however, will not appear singular when we remember the talent which she had already displayed, and the high position she held in the Order—it was the Contessa Isabella de V——, now become Marquise de F——t, who was deputed to Saint Cloud, which had become the head-quarters of Jesuitical intrigue. There was no witness to the first interview which took place between

Cerutti and his faithless love; but they say that the scene must have been terrific, for he was carried from the apartment to his bed in a senseless state, and remained for months paralysed in every limb. He never recovered from the shock which this event had given to his constitution. Twenty years afterwards, when intimate with Mirabeau and Talleyrand, he could not mention the name of the Marquise de F——t, without betraying every symptom of the most powerful emotion, and would confess that, even amid the excitement of the stirring events in which he had been called to take a part, her image was never absent from his mind.

"There is little doubt that, had circumstances taken their natural course, she would have regained as great an influence as she had before possessed. It is certain that, during the proscription of the nobility, *her* safety alone caused anxiety to Cerutti, and even at his latest hour, her name was hovering on his lips. The death of Cerutti was severely felt by the republicans, who hesitated not to attribute to him a greater share of talent than even that possessed by Mirabeau; and I have heard M. de Talleyrand frequently declare that the plan of every speech pronounced by the latter was submitted to Cerutti before it was uttered in the assembly.

"The attachment of the two friends was ardent and sincere, proof against calumny, and firm in spite of jealous intrigue. Chosen to pronounce the funeral oration of Mirabeau, Cerutti burst into tears as he concluded, declaring that he should not long survive the loss he had sustained. His prediction was fulfilled. In less than a year from that very day, he himself descended to the tomb, and M. de Talleyrand alone remained of that all-powerful trio, whose efforts, combined, would have given another turn to the destinies of Europe."

CHAPTER III.

THE SALONS OF PARIS BEFORE THE REVOLUTION.

"WITH Cerutti, Mirabeau, and the *Feuille Villageoise*, began for Talleyrand a new era, a fresh existence, outwardly, at least, for, after all, it was but the realization of the splendid dreams with which he had solaced his young ambition ever since that memorable day on which he had changed the dark blue broad cloth and bright buttons of the *joyeux collegien* for the black serge soutane of the *séminariste*. I have often heard him declare, in his moments of *épanchement*, that, during the years of hardship and trial which followed the first brief triumph of the new ideas, while toiling for existence in America, or struggling to keep up a precarious position in Hamburg, he never once

looked back with regret upon the splendour of his life as Bishop of Autun, surrounded by luxury and grandeur; he never murmured at the loss of wealth, the change of station; but what he should lament to the latest hour of existence is the decay of that *society* in which he had been bred, which was lost in '89 never to return, and which he, perhaps, by his peculiar tone of mind, was fitted more than any other man to enjoy. The events of '89 divided his life into two epochs, so distinct, so far distant from each other, that it often seems to him, when looking back upon the past, that he has realized the old fable, and indeed lived and breathed during two separate periods, and enjoyed two lives, with all their individual hopes and fears, their several joys and sorrows, the triumphs and defeats peculiar to each.

"I have been much struck with some few observations of his upon the charm of the intellectual existence which he had enjoyed before the breaking up of the old system; he scarcely ever reverts to the Revolution without bestowing a regret upon the moral intercourse which it destroyed. He was even then sadly aware that the great changes he desired so much must of necessity

bring others which he dreaded even more. Even then he was sometimes led to doubt whether the good which had been gained could ever compensate for that which had been forfeited. So impressed was he with this idea, that he was like the traveller, who, having arrived at the summit of the mountain, up whose flowery path he has been climbing so gaily, turns back to throw one wistful glance upon the country which he has left behind, with a sad presentiment that he shall not behold the like again. When he is in good humour at Valençay, he loves to linger in memory on that time, and I have known him remain whole days, and even weeks, absorbed in the past, disdaining the present, as unworthy of a good man's interest or a wise man's concern. It is then that his conversation is most interesting; and, after having spent a few hours in listening to those anecdotes which with him seem to *couler de source*, one might almost be led to fancy that one has been holding communion with the dead.

"I remember, on one occasion, to have felt a chill come over me upon hearing him begin an anecdote in these words. 'I was one evening at Madame de Boissière's, when who should enter but

Madame Geoffrin'—Why, the very name is sufficient to bring back the whole of the eighteenth century, with its strange mixture of elegant *badinage* and fierce philosophy, its motley crowd of rude encyclopedists and elegant *marquis à talons rouges!*

"Talleyrand had the good fortune to enter the world of fashion under the very best auspices. It was at the house of the Marquis de Brignolé, one Saturday evening in the year 1772, that he made his *début* on leaving the *séminaire*. It was a memorable event in his life, of quite as great importance as any of those which have succeeded it, and he felt far more emotion upon this occasion than he did when, some thirty years later, he stepped forward to receive the key of *grand chambellan*, or the *portefeuille* of the *affaires étrangères*. Can you not fancy him as he entered that old aristocratic saloon in his *petit collet?* (the coquettish distinction, now gone by, of the candidate for clerical honours.) He was a remarkably handsome youth, and his fresh complexion and long golden hair must have appeared to great advantage among the crowd of withered *savans* in powdered wigs, with which the *salon* was already

filled. To hear him relate the adventures of this his first *soirée* is like reading a page torn from some old memoir, and can seldom fail to inspire a feeling of interest almost akin to awe in the mind of the listener. He tells a story, too, with peculiar gusto, and seems to grow young again in the memory of the circumstances which marked his first appearance in society.

"Madame de Brignolé was one of the most witty clever women at that time in Paris, and held a peculiar position in society, from having had the address to shake off the trammels of caste and clique, and to avow herself the admirer of all that was admirable, whether it proceeded from this set or from that, from the daring *philosophe* or shrinking *vrai-croyant*. She had thus succeeded in gathering together in harmony and good-will elements the most discordant in themselves, and which could be made to amalgamate nowhere save beneath her roof—Madame du Deffand and Madame Geoffrin, Voltaire and Jean Jacques.

"All agreed to consider her *salon* as neutral ground, and to accept at her hands the flag of truce, which she held out to each with so much grace and affability. It happened that the reception wherein

the young Abbé de Perigord made his first appearance was a particularly brilliant one, owing to the return of Baron Holbach, after a long absence from Paris. It was on this occasion that he made the acquaintance of the Chevalier de Boufflers, one of the leaders of fashion of the day, a specimen of the elegant *roué*, the *gredin de bonne compagnie*, who still maintained much of the power they had acquired. Their friendship commenced with a quarrel, and lasted through every change of circumstance until the death of Boufflers, which happened during the Restoration in 1815.

"It would delight you to hear the prince relate this story. He laughs even now at the boyish *espièglerie*, although expressing great contrition for the horrible pun which passion and circumstance wrung from him in the heat of the moment. It was his first, and he says it was his last also, although its great success might certainly have warranted many a repetition of the attempt. The young abbé had ensconced himself in a vacant seat, quite aloof from the rest of the company, being bent on observing all that passed, and caring not for a share in the conversation. He had not long been seated in this place when he was ac-

costed by Philidor, the renowned chess-player, who, like himself, was a man of few words, and of most modest and retiring habits. He was an old *habitué* of the house, and therefore a valuable neighbour for our young novice, and they soon fell into close and friendly conversation. D'Alembert was there, and Diderot, and many other of the bright particular stars of the day, and Philidor, with good-natured attention, pointed them out to the abbé, much diverted with the great interest the latter seemed to take in each illustrious individual, who swept past him on his way to lay his homage at the feet of the lady of the house. They had been some time conversing thus, when their retirement was invaded by two young officers, the one an hussar, the other belonging to the regiment of Royal Cravatte, poor Marie Antoinette's favourite regiment, and the most insolent and saucy one in the whole service. They were evidently very deep in the enjoyment of some good story, for they were speaking low and laughing heartily.

"'Let us get a seat down yonder against the wall,' said the one to the other, 'and I will tell you the rest of the joke. I should not like it to be overheard.'

"'But I see no room,' replied his companion; 'there is Philidor down there talking to some unfledged blackbird from the *séminaire*.'

"'No matter, we must have the place. Philidor will soon yield, and the abbé cannot hold out against us.'

"They advanced straight to where Philidor and his companion were seated, and, with an insolence which can hardly be understood in our day, but which it appears was quite the mark of high birth and fashion at that time, began to annoy, by their loud talking and rude behaviour, the occupants of the two seats which they coveted. Poor Philidor, whose meekness and patience were proverbial, soon became alarmed, and sounded a retreat at once without parley. He rose, with a frightened look at the abbé, and, remarking that the room was so insupportably hot that he was stifled, walked away on tip-toe, not even daring to cast a glance behind. The Chevalier de Boufflers, one of the *garnemens*, immediately seized the vacated chair, and sat upon it soldier-fashion, astride upon the seat, with his chin resting on the back, staring with effrontery at the young abbé, who, nothing daunted, remained quietly in the same position

that he had maintained during the whole evening. He had overheard every word of the conversation which had passed between the two friends as they approached, and was determined not to move an inch. The Royal Cravatte stood beside the hussar, and the abbé was thus completely hemmed in, save on the side next the door, through which it was the evident intention of the two friends to make him soon vanish. Finding, however, their intention completely defeated by the cool manner with which it was received, the Royal Cravatte lost patience, and asked the abbé, with a sneer, if the heat of the place did not incommode him, at the same time advising him, with condescending kindness, to seek the refreshing coolness of the second *salon*, as his friend had already done at their approach. But the abbé answered with a bland politeness peculiar to his manner even then, thanking the officer for his attention, but assuring him that, being of a rather chilly nature, he preferred remaining in the warmer apartment. Royal Cravatte thereupon grew angry; he was a Cadet de Montigny, not long arrived from Normandy, and had not yet lost his miserable Norman drawl.

"'*Dites donc, mon cher abbé,*' said he. 'Per-

haps, as you are just born, you may not yet have been to school; you have yet to learn many things, Monsieur l'Abbé, among which—' 'Pardon me,' interrupted the abbé, starting up, with heightened colour and with flashing eye, and mimicking the lengthened nasal twang of the officer, 'I *have* been to school, and have learnt my letters, and know that an *abbé* (A B) is not made to *céder* (C D), and 'tis not your *épée* (E P) can make me *ôter* (O T).'

"The loud voice and insolent gesture of the officer had caused a little knot of the assembled guests to gather round, and this sally was received with roars of laughter. Boufflers, who never could resist pleasantry, seemed more diverted than any one present; and, while the discomfited Royal Cravatte slunk among the company, unable to bear the mockery which the witty retort of the abbé had brought upon him, Boufflers shook him heartily by the hand, and applauded the jest with right good will.

"This is the very first *bon-mot* of the prince upon record, and although he expresses himself heartily ashamed of its perpetration, yet it was the means of establishing his reputation as a person

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not to be slighted, one with whom it would be necessary to reckon before venturing on pleasantry. The story, of course, went round the *salon*, to the infinite delight of the *savans*, who were enchanted at witnessing the military insolence of the Royal Cravatte receive a check from a quarter whence it would have been so little expected. Rumour of the witticism soon reached the ears of Madame du Deffand, who instantly requested that the young abbé might be presented to her. It was the Chevalier de Boufflers himself who undertook the office, and, with a fluttering heart, young Talleyrand walked across the *salon*, and accosted the venerable lady, whose great fame for making reputations had reached even to the *séminaire* from which he had just escaped. It was an awful moment of his life, and he describes it as one of the greatest emotion he has ever experienced.

"Madame du Deffand was at that time the oracle of the witty circles of Paris; her verdict was sufficient at once to make or mar the reputation of a man of wit; and it cannot be wondered at, therefore, if our young *séminariste* approached with reverence the high fauteuil in which the lady sat, as it were enthroned, presiding over the assembly

with undisputed sway, nor if the whole scene should have produced an impression upon his memory which time has not even yet been powerful enough to efface. Madame du Deffand was surrounded by a select circle of her chosen friends, the favourite few whom she honoured with especial notice; and in the midst there stood, beside her chair, a low stool, reserved for those with whom she wished to hold more private converse than could possibly be enjoyed with any member of the circle. It was to this seat that the Chevalier de Boufflers led the young Abbé de Perigord, who thus in a moment found himself the object of curiosity and criticism to the whole collection of *beaux-esprits*, who served as a kind of body-guard to their queen elect. The abbé was, however, at the moment, but little occupied with the effect which he might produce upon the company; his attention was entirely absorbed by Madame du Deffand herself; and if he *did* experience a slight nervous agitation as he took his seat beside her, it was in dread of her all-powerful verdict alone.

"It was almost impossible to imagine a countenance of greater benignity than that of Madame du Deffand; she was a complete specimen, both

in person and costume, of venerable beauty; and as the abbé gazed upon her, he *felt* that there was no longer ridicule in the platonic love of Horace Walpole, or in the enthusiastic passion of her later admirers. She had been, as you are aware, totally blind for many years, and this infirmity, instead of being a disfigurement, as might be imagined, seemed to increase the mild placidity of her features almost to beatitude. At the moment of young Talleyrand's approach, she was still under the influence of the delight which his boyish retort had inspired, and, as soon as he was seated, she bade him recount the story, which he was fain to do, and, aided by her encouragement and the applause of the circle, he told it with so much *verve* and good-humour, that his success was complete. He was welcomed among the *coterie* as a kindred spirit, and from that hour was considered an acquisition to that choice 'circle.' He was thus thrown at once into the midst of the society of *gens-de-lettres* of that epoch, the most brilliant ever registered in the annals of the world. The schoolboy pun of Talleyrand is forgotten now—lost amid the more sterling wit of the many *bon-mots* and trite aphorisms to which he has given

utterance, and which have become popular in every country. Not so the *naïve* exclamation of Madame du Deffand upon the occasion, when she learned the fright and sudden retreat of Philidor. 'That man was born a *fool*,' said she; 'nothing but his *genius* saves him!'

"It is by the multiplicity of anecdotes of this nature that the prince has the power of conveying the listener, at a single bound, back to the eighteenth century. The absence of all passion, or, what is more probable, the great command he has acquired over it, gives a greater interest to his recitals than any I have ever experienced while reading the best written memoirs. I have heard from another quarter of the judgment of the prince's character pronounced by the blind woman on that very same evening, and which, if true, ought to stamp her fame as a physiognomist beyond compare. After having passed her hand slowly over the features of the young abbé, as was her wont when any stranger was presented to her notice, she exclaimed, '*Allez, jeune homme.* Nature has been lavish of her gifts, and your own foresight will render you independent of those of fortune.'

"The immense variety of pictures like the foregoing, which the prince can command at will from the storehouse of his memory, is almost incredible. No one seems to have understood so well as himself that stupendous epoch, the latter half of the eighteenth century, that glorious reign of intellect and reason, when, for the first time in the history of society, genius and talent were admitted to greater consideration than high birth or riches; when every passion—the love of pleasure—the love of power—even the love of the marvellous—had given place to the love of *truth*—sometimes the greatest of all marvels; when the old aristocracy, tottering with decay, seemed to call in weak and puny accents upon its robust successor, the aristocracy of letters, for succour in its hour of need, 'Help us, or we perish!' and was answered sturdily, 'Be of us; or look to yourselves;' when the high-born and the long-descended sought no more to *honour* with patronage, but to *flatter* by imitation, those whom their ancestors would have deemed of scarcely more importance than their lacqueys; when, to be admitted to the circle of Madame Geoffrin, or the *déjeuners* of the Abbé Morellet, was a distinction more eagerly sought for

than the admission into the royal circles had been during the preceding reign.

"This short pause before the revolution, which might be compared to the breathing time allowed to combatants, or rather to the cold shiver which precedes the raging fever, has been described by the prince as the most intoxicating period of his life. In this unprecedented mixture of society, he was viewed with favour by each and all. Whether as the nobleman of aristocratic descent, or the man of wit and talent, he was admitted into every circle, and perhaps was thus singular in his perfect acquaintance with them all. He, who has so little enthusiasm in his character, will sometimes grow quite enthusiastic when speaking of that time; and I have heard him exclaim with melancholy pride, 'Could I, by forfeiting the memory of that brief space of light and glory, add thrice the number of years so spent to my existence *now*, I would not do it. I hold too dear even the privilege which I possess of exclaiming with Ovid, "*Vidi tantùm*," and often mourn those days in the very words of old Brantôme: "Nothing is left of all that wit and gallantry, that vast expenditure (*folle dépense*) of bravery and chivalry. What

good remains to *me* of all this pomp? None—*save that I have seen it!*"'

"The greatest of all the regrets expressed by the prince is for the art of conversation, '*l'art de causer*,' which, he declares, never flourished in any country save France, and has been lost even there ever since the revolution. He himself is perhaps the only individual left to tell us in what that 'art' consisted. Like every gift of the Muses, it seemed to shun the circles of the great, and to flourish best where reigned equality. The réunions of Madame Necker in Paris, when her husband was minister, were always stiff and embarrassed; her charming *déjeuners* at St. Ouen, where all state and ceremony were laid aside, will be for ever celebrated in the annals of letters. The proper cultivation of the 'art of conversation' was dependent on the union of many circumstances, and success could not be relied on even by those who appeared in every way best qualified for the attempt. None could tell why it was that some succeeded thus while others failed—why the same wit which shone so brightly in one *salon* was dull and frigid in another. D'Alembert declared that *he* could find conversation but in one single *salon*,

in Paris, that of Madame Suard, the wife of the celebrated translator and commentator of Hume and Robertson, of whom Boufflers said to M. de Talleyrand one day, '*She is the only pretty woman of my acquaintance with whom I have never been in love; and yet she is the woman I love best on earth.*' A more delicate compliment to virtue than this was, perhaps, never paid. Diderot was most animated in the house of Madame Helvetius, and nursed his powers for her reception-days.

"Madame Geoffrin herself presided over her own *salon* after the death of Fontenelle, who, for many years, deaf, purblind, and almost centenary, had thrown such lustre on her meetings, that foreigners of rank, and wealth, and talent, had crowded to Paris merely to be presented there; and such was the charm of the society into which they found themselves ushered, that many of them renounced their country to enjoy it without molestation. Buffon, who in ordinary intercourse was vulgar in the extreme (so at least says M. de Talleyrand, who knew him well), became sublime at Moulin-Joli, where Watelet the painter had the good luck to assemble all the wit and talent of the

capital. Here it was that Buffon one day grew inspired, and recited whole chapters of his work without missing a single word, much to the astonishment of many of the strangers there, who thought that it was all improvisation. These intellectual *soirées* of the *roture* had succeeded in the guidance and government of 'conversation' to the *petits soupers* of the *ancien régime*, but differed from them, inasmuch as the intellect alone was fed. The principle of equality had gone so far, that it was agreed among the *literati* to avoid the tables of the rich, lest he who gave a good dinner should feel a right to direct the conversation.

"At most of these literary meetings, therefore, no set repast was to be found; the refreshments provided were but scanty and of the simplest kind. One single cup of coffee for each guest at Madame Suard's, one single glass of punch (sometimes prepared by Franklin, though) at Madame Helvetius's, formed the whole of the *menu*. Sobriety was considered indispensable to the clearness and steadiness of debate, and the intellect remained unthickened by eating and drinking. The Abbé Morellet alone had chosen to add music and feasting to the attraction of the conversation held at

his house, and had done so with success. But the *déjeuners* were exquisite, although slight. '*Eat a little and of little*' was the abbé's recommendation to his guests, and the music, that of Glück, was presided over by himself and executed by Mellico. The first representation of 'Orphée' took place at one of these *déjeuners*, the *romance* of which had such an effect on Rousseau, that he almost fainted on hearing it, declaring that 'It was music never to be heard at all, or listened to for ever.'

"There was but little jealousy at these different réunions; each came prepared to contribute to the general amusement, and to listen to the contributions of others. Every one was openly criticised and honestly applauded according to his merit. The barren fecundity of Parny could find admirers as well as the noble poetry of Delille. There was scarcely, indeed, a distinction of *coterie*, so nicely were the elements of this society blended. The only dissidence which existed was between Madame Geoffrin and the Abbé Morellet, in consequence of the preference of Jean Jacques Rousseau for the house of the latter. Madame Geoffrin had sought by every means in her power to con-

ciliate the good-will and favour of Jean Jacques, but she was too fond of patronage. And to all her advances he had answered, in his surly language, 'that he hated both benefits and benefactors.'

"The well-known *mot piquant* of Madame Geoffrin upon the abbé's guests, which she declared were composed of '*trompeurs, trompés, trompettes,*' amply revenged her disappointment, but widened the breach between the rival camps.

"'The chief delight of the abbé's réunions,' says M. de Talleyrand, 'was the perfect equality which reigned there. The terror of any encroachment or assumption of superiority was so great, that Madame Suard, on being accused of allowing D'Alembert to act as *president* of the society gathered at her house, by placing him on a higher *fauteuil* than those occupied by the other guests, was obliged to *apologize* for so doing, and to plead the ill health and weakened digestion of the philosopher, which compelled him to remain continually in an almost upright position.'

"'Good Heavens! what a quantity of pattens!' exclaimed, in a sneering tone, M. de Creutz, the Swedish ambassador, as he entered the ante-room at Madame du Deffand's, where Madame Necker had undertaken to present him.

"'So much the better,' answered the lady, 'they give us promise of good company.'

"It was in the frank reception of talent, no matter whence it emanated, wherein lay the secret charm of these *conversaziones*. No individual was excluded as a matter of course, none admitted as a matter of right.

"I remember being once much delighted with an argument which took place upon this very subject between the prince and one of the best writers of our own day, who has since risen to greatness and power by the assistance of his pen alone. The latter maintained that a greater knowledge of mankind was to be obtained by the study of well-written books, than could be acquired even by personal experience. The prince, in reply, gave utterance to some of the most beautiful and original thoughts which I have ever heard him express.

"'Tell me not of books,' said he, good-humouredly, 'they never can contain the *natural* impressions of the writer. They can express neither surprise nor fear—the very anger which they convey has been all premeditated. Tell me not of books—they are "composed" by men, and are even greater hypocrites than they. The history of every age

would be found with far greater truth in the history of its conversations (*causeries*) than in the most brilliant of its literary productions. Few men write, all converse; authors have copied each other both in style and sentiment ever since the world began, but the *causeur* is himself, and speaks as he feels and thinks. The old axiom, *verba volant*, is a great evil, but the addition to the proverb, *scripta manent*, is a greater still. You, who are preparing to write the history of one of the greatest struggles which ever took place in the annals of the universe, would do well to study the history of the conversations of the generations preceding; you will find there the preconception of many an event which falsely seems to have occurred spontaneously, and which overwhelms us with wonder at its apparent rashness. Even Louis Quatorze, whose Bastille yawned so greedily for those who dared to *write* a syllable against the justice of his measures, was known to wince beneath the lash of the witty *causeurs* of his day; he felt that he was powerless against their attacks, and was compelled to flatter and to pardon, as Richelieu, that greater tyrant still, had been forced to do before him. He was too clever to affect to despise their ridicule, and trembled lest resenting it might expose him to further stings.'

"'These witlings are as troublesome as summer-flies,' said the magnificent monarch one day to Colbert, who had reported to him an epigram which he had heard in the *salon* of Madame Cornuel.

"'Yes, sire, *and just as unconquerable*,' replied Colbert.

"'To which remark the greatest sovereign of the world could only answer with a sigh of mortified conviction. Not a privilege was granted during the reign, not a decree was passed, which had not first been debated in the circles of fashion, with as much bitterness and energy as it afterwards created in the royal council chamber. The memoirs of the time, the letters of Madame de Sevigné, bear ample evidence of this. The regent who succeeded, was himself of a spirit too near akin to the intrepid *causeurs* of his reign to visit them with severity. He laughed with them and at them, while his harshness to those writers who displeased him was even greater than that of his predecessor. Louis Quinze encouraged not the persecution of authors, but loved to listen to the daily report of the "conversations" which took place, not only among the court circles, but even down to those of the lowest *bourgeoisie*. Madame de Pompadour

complains bitterly, in one of her letters, of this extraordinary apathy concerning the libels which were published both against herself and him. "He cares not for what is written, only for what issaid," exclaimed she, "as if any consideration could restrain the tongues of ungrateful courtiers."

"'The author of the gross epigram upon Marshal Saxe was suffered to go scot-free, while the poor parrot who recited it at Madame de la Vaillière's for the amusement of the company, was punished with the Bastille for life. Now compare all these *causeries* and their results to the *conversations* of the eighteenth century, and their gigantic issue—the great revolution. The displacing of a minister—the puerile questions of religious form—the end and aim of Télémaque—these were the kind of questions which had formed the subjects of debate during the reign of Louis Quatorze. The acrimony with which they were discussed, and the genius and passion which were displayed in the disputes to which they gave rise, sometimes went far enough to alarm the throne, without creating the slightest interest in the minds of the people.

"'How different the consequences of that single remark, made in the midst of a gay and laughing *coterie*, soon after the accession of Louis Seize,

when everything promised security and happiness, prosperity within and peace without, when not a single indication of the distant tempest had as yet appeared; and the old nobleman asked, in jeering pleasantry, of his son, who was speaking of the power of the law—"And pray, young man, will you tell me what *is* the law?" and was answered by the young man with sudden inspiration, "The law is the expression of the general will!" The axiom has since been repeated to satiety, and has formed the text and basis of the grandest arguments of the revolutionary orators, but few know that it was first pronounced in the manner I have described. I found the whole account of this "conversation" in a letter among my uncle's papers, in which the writer, who was present when it occurred, gives also the description of the high disputes which the remark created, after the first moment of silence with which it was received—the silence of conviction in the young, the silence of disapproval in the old—had passed away. This maxim, which, dropped thus at random, buried like the acorn, not forgotten, and which brought forth such goodly fruit in its due time and season, is another proof of the tremendous power of our *soi-disant* "gay and frivolous" CONVERSATION.'"

CHAPTER IV.

TALLEYRAND'S BOUDOIR—PORTRAITS—MADAME DE BRIONNE—MADAME DE FLAHAUT—A GAMBLING SCENE—THE CHEVALIER DE FENELON—MADAME GRANDT—PRINCESS TALLEYRAND.

On the morning after the conversation on the art of conversing, which I have just transcribed, I happened to find myself for some little time alone with C. in the prince's dressing-room. I had been summoned to the sanctum by M. de Talleyrand himself, who had received letters from England by that day's post, in answering which my English might, he thought, be turned to account. I had obeyed the message with the greatest pleasure, as C. had already informed me that admission to his boudoir at the hour of his toilet was an honour sought by many, and accorded but to few. In this exclusion he was

most rigid, and he reserved the admission as a *distinction*, refusing to yield it as a right even to his most intimate friends. It was perhaps well that he did so, for, by a singular inconsistency, he who has been so often reproached with prudence and caution, was at this moment unguarded and unsuspicious as a child. As I had, according to the etiquette of the place, forestalled by some little time the precise moment fixed by the prince for our rendezvous, I profited by the vacant time to examine attentively the furniture and ornaments of this favourite retreat of the diplomatist, wherein perhaps the peace or discord of European states had been at various times planned and promoted.

It was a light and cheerful apartment, looking out into the fosses surrounding the château, which, at that season of the year, were all gay with verdure and flowering shrubs; then far away the view extended over the park, at the end of which the dark forest encircles the landscape with a belt of sombre hue, and shuts out the distant horizon. The room contained but little furniture, and that all of the antique cast, in use at the time of the Empire, hard and angular, stiff and naked. The large leathern chair for the prince, which stood in the centre of

the room beside an old-fashioned dressing-table, upon which were already spread the divers utensils for his approaching toilet, although giving my *English* prejudices a slight *inquietude*, yet awoke certain pleasurable reminiscences of the court of Louis Seize and the *toilette du matin* of the beaux and *muscadins* of '89. Near these stood a mahogany bureau, upon which his secretary wrote while the prince dictated the correspondence even amid the elaborate manœuvres of two valets-de-chambre, which kept him for the moment in a state of discomfort and subjection.

The walls were hung round with portraits. C. told me that they were, without exception, those of *friends*, and I examined the collection with the greatest interest. They were arranged without any attempt at order, neither by age nor date, merely according to the shape of the frame, and the size of the panel, and it was curious to observe the confusion to which such an arrangement had given rise; Alexander the autocrat and Mirabeau the democrat hung side by side, while Fréron and Voltaire gazed at each other with that peculiar smirk which has been so happily denominated the "painter's smile." I was struck with the vast number of female

portraits, of all ages and denominations, which met the eye; there was a beautiful crayon drawing of Madame de Genlis with her harp, and another of Madame de Staël with her book and pencil, and a full-length painting of Madame Roland hung opposite to one of Madame de Lamballe. I glanced over the collection with most intense interest; it was the romantic chapter of the life of M. de Talleyrand, one with which diplomacy and politics had nought to do. "How I should love you to tell me the history of the individuals whose representations are assembled here," said I to C., who was watching me as I walked leisurely round; "what admirable illustrations to your 'Vie Anecdotique' they would furnish!"

"Indeed," returned my friend, "the 'Vie Anecdotique' would scarcely be complete without them. As I have already told you, M. de Talleyrand, from his earliest youth, has relied upon the support and patronage of women. There is scarcely one of these ladies who has not played some part in the advancement of his fortune. You might follow the epochs of his life by the title and social position of his patronesses. You smile; but it is even so. No *English* mind can ever

be made to comprehend the sort of *liäison* which sometimes exists between persons of different sex in France. It is of every kind of friendship the most pure and disinterested; *love* is seldom generated by these attachments; that sentiment would on the one side tend to mar the devotion, and on the other, render the feeling liable to the changes and chances of caprice. I could call to mind numberless examples of this species of allegiance, which, having begun in youth, have continued unto old age with the same confidence, the same self-sacrifice. Come hither; you will find an apt illustration of my meaning."

He led me to a portrait placed in the shadow of the chimney. "This was the first friend of M. de Talleyrand, when he was a youth just let loose from the *séminaire*, and she whom this picture represents was a woman already advancing to maturity. Surely we cannot suspect the existence of love *there*. This lady, whose name was so long associated with every early success of the prince, when he was still Abbé de Perigord, was the celebrated Comtesse de Brionne, the mother of the unfortunate Princess de Lamballe, and grandmother of the present King of Sardinia. She was the first to distinguish the merit of the young abbé, and by her influence to main-

tain him in his position in spite of the dislike manifested towards him by the court of Marie Antoinette. Even lately I heard him speak of her in terms of intense gratitude and affection; and his voice, usually so deep and grave, faltered as he recounted to me the story of her death. She was among the first emigrants after the breaking out of the revolution, and retired to the Austrian dominions, having, by permission of the emperor, assumed the title of Princess of Lorraine. There she lived in poverty and obscurity for some years, resisting every effort made by M. de Talleyrand to obtain forgiveness for what she deemed his *crime* in having deserted his caste and renounced his profession, to adopt the principles of the revolution.

"Among the little circle of devoted friends who had gathered round her in her exile, the conduct of M. de Talleyrand was frequently the subject of conversation, and she has been heard to declare that his defalcation had given her more pain than many sorrows which ought to have touched her more nearly. In the year 1805, when M. de Talleyrand, then in the zenith of his favour with Napoleon, accompanied the latter on his famous tour of 'mediation' into Austria, he repaired to the little town of Linz, where the princess had chosen

her retreat, expressly to obtain an interview, with the hope of soothing her into forgetfulness of his errors. The letter which he despatched from the inn where he alighted, was a model of grace and politeness. He had recalled in its composition all the half-forgotten traditions of courtesy and high breeding which he had learned in her school. He had flattered her by every expression of gratitude for former favours, appealed to the memory of bygone days, and announced his intention of personally waiting upon her for the answer on the morning following, unless he received a summons to appear before her that same evening.

"No answer came that night, and accordingly, about twelve on the day following, the prince set forth from the little inn where he had alighted, to gain the small château, situated a short league from the town, where the princess resided, full of doubt, and already somewhat disappointed at not having received, in reply to his letter, even so much as a cold permission to present himself before her. He had attired himself in a costume which should recall to her mind as much as possible the period of their first acquaintance, having carefully laid aside every token of the rank which he held at the court of the usurper, resolving that nothing in his

person or demeanour should shock the taste and feelings of his friend. He has often owned to me that his heart beat with such violence as he drew near the château which the guide pointed out to him as that occupied by the princess, that he felt half inclined to turn back, and to leave his errand unaccomplished until he had received some token of the oblivion of his errors, which he had been at so much pains to seek.

"At length, the carriage stopped before the gate of a ruinous-looking building, which stood on the brow of the hill outside the town. M. de Talleyrand alighted, and walked up to the iron gate which looked into the forecourt, for he thought it might appear more discreet and in better taste to avoid every semblance of state and ceremony. He wished to bring to her mind the Abbé de Perigord alone, and hoped she might forget what he had become since then. The whole place wore a wild and desolate aspect, and the silence alarmed him. Not a soul was stirring about the premises, and what was still more extraordinary, was the circumstance of the shutters being all closed, although it was bright noon-day.

"He pulled the bell with a violent effort, and it sent forth that hollow, melancholy sound which is

so peculiar to a deserted building. The summons was answered by an old portress, who hobbled to the gate with lagging pace, and eyes red and swollen with weeping, while, close at her heels, followed the old dog, whom he recognised on the instant as old Vaillant, who used to run so joyously down the steps of the *perron* to meet him when he entered the courtyard of the hotel of Madame de Brionne in Paris. But the animal knew him no longer, for he barked and growled with savage fury at every token of recognition, and the woman only sobbed the louder in answer to his inquiries.

"'The princess was *gone!*' she said. 'She had departed but a few hours before. She had left the château with all her retinue, and she feared that her highness would never return!' M. de Talleyrand has described the pang of that moment as being one of the most bitter that he has ever experienced throughout his whole life; and he remained for an instant silent from emotion. The woman drew from her pocket a letter which she said was to be delivered to the gentleman who had written from Linz on the evening before, and who was to call for the answer. The prince took it in silence, not daring even to gaze upon its con-

tents until alone. He re-entered the carriage, and drove towards the town, and it was not until the château was lost to sight, and the barking of old Vaillant was heard no more, that he mustered courage sufficient to break the seal and open the envelope.

"It contained nought but his own letter—not a word, not a syllable in explanation. He turned to the superscription, and then no longer felt astonishment. It was addressed to the '*Prince de Benevent, Ministre de Napoleon, Empereur des Français.*' Every word was underlined; the meaning was clear. Such a person was unknown to the Princesse de Lorraine! In spite of her advanced age and feeble health—in spite of the assurance of protection which Napoleon had vouchsafed to her on his approach, she had fled from the place rather than meet him who had deceived all her hopes, and fallen so low (to use her own expression) as 'to serve as footstool to enable the usurper to sit more at his ease upon the throne of the Bourbons.' She returned no more to Linz even after the departure of Napoleon, but fixed her residence at Presburg; and when M. de Talleyrand repaired to Vienna to assist at the famous

Congress of 1814, his friendship made him forget his former repulse, and once more did he solicit more humbly, more passionately than before, for pardon and reconciliation. This time the appeal was not in vain; he had returned to the good and righteous cause; he had once more re-entered the *voie sacrée*, and she answered him in her own hand, and by return of courier, bidding him use all despatch, as 'the moments now were numbered.'

"No sooner did the missive reach him, than he set out from Vienna without a moment's delay, travelling night and day, until he reached Presburg. It was just at the grey peep of dawn when he traversed the streets of that ancient city, but yet he resolved to drive at once, prompted by one of those singular presentiments to which through life he has always listened, to the old palace which the princess now inhabited.

"How different was his reception from that he had experienced at Linz! Even at this early hour, servants were standing round the gate; and as soon as his carriage, with the broad rattling wheels and jingling bells, had turned the corner of the street, the gates were thrown

open wide, and the carriage entered at once, without impediment. It was evident that he had been expected with impatience, for he was received in silence, as if there had been no time to waste in idle greeting. The old servants whom he remembered did not speak out their welcome, but merely bowed in acknowledgment of his kindly recognition, and hurried him without announcement and without ceremony to the chamber of their mistress.

"It was not until he stood upon the threshold of that silent chamber and viewed the scene within, that the truth flashed upon his mind—then the reason of the expectation and the silent greeting, of the haste in which he had been ushered into her presence, became evident at once, and he tottered forward to the bed, and fell upon his knees by the side of the priest, whose muttered prayer filled the room with a low mysterious murmur. Madame de Brionne was dying; her eyes were already closed, and her fingers were already relaxing their grasp of the rosary which lay outside the bed. It seemed as if the repose of death had already stolen over her, when suddenly, as if a supernatural instinct had warned her of the entrance of M. de Talley-

rand, she started up, and gazed at him fixedly; then said, with a sweet, sad smile of affection, as she stretched forth her hand towards him, 'Ah, Monsieur de Perigord, *you alone* can tell how dearly I have loved you!' She sighed deeply, sank back upon the pillow, and before his lips had ceased their pressure upon her outstretched hand, it lay powerless and dead within his own! She had died while the words of tenderness with which she had greeted him were yet upon her lips, and while that smile of recognition yet lingered on her placid countenance. And when M. de Talleyrand rose from that bedside, her form was already straightened beneath the coverlet; the tapers were already lighted round the bed, and the sheet was thrown over her face, concealing it from view, so that he beheld it no more!

"I have always considered this event as one of the most touching episodes in M. de Talleyrand's life. I have heard him speak of Madame de Brionne in terms of the highest veneration, as a woman of the most exalted virtue, and one of the grandest souls he had ever met with, well fitted by nature to be that which fortune had made her—the sister and mother of kings and princes—and there

is, perhaps, a little remorse mingled with the regret with which he laments the loss of her society during so many years. Her advice had guided and sustained his youth; it might, perhaps, have aided him in his maturer age; and, while he was at the height of his power and influence during the empire, he has often surprised, in his own mind, a slight feeling of uneasiness respecting the sentiment with which Madame de Brionne would peruse the journals wherein his name was mentioned in connexion with that of the emperor. I think that the tie which bound him to Madame de Brionne must have been the only one by which he suffered his soul to be held captive. In other cases, he withstood the influence; in this one alone did he submit to it, perhaps, in fact, scarcely conscious of his slavery.

"The next link in these voluntary bonds was that woven by beauty and talent combined. Young as he was, he was already too old to be captivated by wit *alone*. The *liaison* to which I now refer has made much noise in the world, and were I attempting to represent the prince, not as he really is, but as I should wish to find him, I might gloss over the one spot of this kind which has darkened

his career, or endeavour to wipe off the reproach which he has incurred; but I will give you the facts as they really were, leaving you to make your own comments.

"It would appear that, contrary to the usual theory, the fascination entered neither by the eye nor by the ear; it was the result of fanatical admiration of his great powers of mind. This lady was married, at the age of fifteen, to the Count de Flahaut, who was fifty-eight. With the steady, uncompromising morality of your English principles, you will, perhaps, be startled at the coolness with which I mention this; but surely there is some excuse in this unjustifiable union, and the unstability of principle at the time, and it is unfair to separate crime and error from the institutions from which they have arisen. It was not till after the death of her husband, who perished on the scaffold in '92, that she became acquainted with M. de Talleyrand, having been in active correspondence with him during the whole period of his exile, and having saved him, by her timely information of the state of feelings and parties in Paris, from acting with precipitation, and from yielding to the treacherous invitations of false friends, who advised his return

to certain destruction. He had received, for many months, regular intimation of all that was passing in the capital. At first he had paid but small attention to these anonymous epistles, but, by degrees, as he beheld the realization of all the previsions put forth by the unknown writer, he took confidence, and resolved to abide by the counsels expressed in the mysterious letters, and so blindly did he rely upon the correctness of the information contained therein, that, being twice upon the point of re-crossing the channel, he twice deferred the step in obedience to the advice of his anonymous friend, and each time had cause of rejoicing that he had thus acted.

"Madame Champion, at that time, like himself, an exile in London, was his only confidante in this affair, and to her alone did he communicate his embarrassment touching the author of the correspondence. I have spoken to you before about the singular fatality which has sometimes attended upon the steps of M. de Talleyrand, and which must be attributable to his surprising memory and great powers of observation. In this instance did he once more experience its influence, and by its aid alone, I have often heard him declare, did

he discover the name and station of his benefactor.

"He had one day been speaking with Madame Champion upon the subject, and in his perplexity was enumerating the relations whose affection could be likely thus to render them vigilant and clear-sighted; she had called over successively every degree of relationship—aunt, uncle, cousin, brother. But to every new suggestion, M. de Talleyrand discovered some well-founded objection, until, at last, Madame Champion cried, laughingly, 'Well, it is evident, then, you have, as in the good old fairy tales, some wise and powerful *Marraine*.' M. de Talleyrand shook his head. 'Alas, Madame, neither *Marraine* nor *Filleul*,' returned he, quoting from Beaumarchais's 'Figaro,' and the subject dropped.

"It was soon after this that the unknown friend advised his return to Paris, and, as he had hitherto found benefit in following the counsels thus conveyed, he hesitated not in this instance. Upon his arrival in the capital, he found everything in the state in which he had been led to expect it, and his greeting was such as to make him rejoice that he had not lingered in the execution of

the step suggested by his well-wisher. After this, he was indefatigable in his researches. He kept the adventure no secret, but told it in every circle he frequented; hoping thereby to obtain some clue to the discovery of his benefactor. He felt sure that the letters were written by a female, not from the hand-writing, nor from any peculiar refinement of style, but from the singular mixture of boldness and timidity which was evident in every line. The deep interest expressed for his safety, and yet the kind of awkward fear lest this interest should be exaggerated in the mind of the reader; in short, whether it was that the conviction of M. de Talleyrand led him to believe that such disinterested sentiment could emanate from none but a woman, I know not, but it is certain that never did his suspicion light on an individual of the other sex, while, from the very moment of his return to Paris, did he begin to look around among the women of his acquaintance, and to fix suspicion upon each, until further research displayed the futility of his surmises.

"He had already been for some time at Paris without being able to obtain a clue whereby to form any probable conjectures upon the subject,

when, one evening, being by chance at a *soirée* given by Barras, his attention was attracted to a young lady whom he had at first observed with that languid indifference with which one is too apt to survey a stranger, where there is nothing in particular to arrest the attention. M. de Talleyrand had been standing, half hid by a curtain, in a recess of one of the windows, talking to Count Réal, and the lady had left her seat at the further end of the room, to take one close beside him. He had paid but slight attention to this circumstance, and after the departure of Réal, went to join the group of talkers assembled in the doorway.

"He had not been here many moments, before he observed the same pale lady in deep black move stealthily from the place which she had occupied, and where she had been listening with glistening eyes and heaving bosom to the various questions of interest which he had been debating, and again seat herself close to his side. M. de Talleyrand, struck with the pertinacity with which she seemed to follow his movements, was naturally led to examine her with more attention. She was of small stature, and delicate in feature, with eyes of most peculiar lustre, and the sable

weeds in which she was attired added to the interest inspired by her youth and pallid countenance. 'Who is that lady?' asked M. de Talleyrand, abruptly, of the person with whom he was conversing. The lady blushed deep as scarlet. It was evident that she had heard the question. 'She is the widow of the Count de Flahaut,' was the reply; but it conveyed no association to the memory of M. de Talleyrand, and he shook his head, endeavouring to recal to mind the name at the old court, when suddenly his informant continued, 'You surely must remember her marriage? It is not so very long ago. She was a Demoiselle *Filleul*, a name of no importance—second-rate provincial *hobereaux*.'

"The word acted like magic upon the whole nervous system of M. de Talleyrand. By some unaccountable chain of thought, the laughing observation of Madame Champion recurred to his mind, and he inquired more fully concerning the lady. Everything he heard tended to confirm the idea which had so strangely taken possession of his mind with regard to her identity with his unknown protector. His first step, of course, was to get himself presented to her. And how could he, with his

tact and observation, fail to perceive the strong emotion visible in her manner of acknowledging his attentions, and the faltering, unsteady voice in which she answered his seemingly careless, though strictly polite address? He steadfastly avoided, however, in this first interview, any allusion to his journey to London or to his return—he was fearful of creating embarrassment — fearful of exciting alarm or suspicion of his real motive for seeking her acquaintance, and he was aware of the necessity for prudence and discretion. He despatched a note the next morning to inquire at what hour he might be permitted to present himself at the lady's house. This was done designedly.

"The handwriting of the few lines of cold politeness which he received in answer, confirmed at once the bold hope he had entertained; and he hurried to the appointment, with what feelings of tenderness and gratitude may well be imagined. In all the conversations which I have held with him upon the subject, he has never been led into betraying the particulars of this interview—no one can tell how he first broke to the lady the discovery he had made, nor how she received his warm and trembling thanks; but from that hour

her spirit had found its master, and bowed to his own, held captive and enslaved.

"The faith and devotion of the fair young countess were never belied through the long years of trial and vicissitude which followed, and instances are recorded of her risking hopes of fame and fortune, nay, her very life itself, to aid the prince in the struggle against destiny which he had so bravely undertaken. She twice made the journey to England alone, without protection, going round by way of Holland, to serve him; and when, by the sale of her first novel in England, she had realized a small sum of money, it was shared with him, who, she declared to the latest hour of her life, had more right to it than she herself, for he it was who had caused her to exercise the talent which Heaven had bestowed, and the existence of which she would never have known had it not been for the taste and cultivation which he had imparted.

"Their double marriage was a double error, which has never been satisfactorily accounted for, and which must remain a secret. In the case of the lady it brought rank and affluence, but neither ease of mind nor happiness, while in that of the

prince, which *followed* soon after, the consequences were humiliation and disappointment."

"Oh!" said I, "you must surely have something to tell me concerning the marriage of the prince? That is one of the greatest events of his life, and one which has puzzled his biographers more than his most ambiguous proceedings."

"The world has been unjust to Madame de Talleyrand," replied C. "I knew her for many years, and she was far from being the fool which it has pleased the public to consider her. M. de Talleyrand himself, amid all his good-humoured quotations of her *bêtise*, or absence of mind, cannot help pausing to commend the great tact and admirable *esprit de conduite* which made her, during those years when he was in high office under Napoleon's government, an invaluable aid and ally by the manner in which she practised that most difficult art, so highly prized by the French, *l'art de tenir son salon*. This, to a man of M. de Talleyrand's tastes, might be of much more importance than the *bon mots* of Madame de Staël, or the stately dignity of Madame Recamier. Look at yonder portrait by the side of the window, and you can judge of the beauty which had power

to fascinate a man so *difficile* and *blasé* as M. de Talleyrand."

C. drew aside the blue silk curtain which shaded the casement, in order to throw a full light upon the picture of which he spoke, and I was positively startled at the heavenly beauty of the countenance thus disclosed. It was indeed lovely, and I felt at once that no further explanation was necessary to account for the step which had excited so much astonishment and so much condemnation.

"However, many reasons did exist more worthy both of M. de Talleyrand himself and of the object of his choice; and in spite of all that has gone abroad respecting his caprice, I have ever found that those who had known her longest, loved her most. I have myself heard M. de Talleyrand recount the story of their first meeting, which he did with most exquisite relish, smacking strongly of the good old times of Lauzun and Richelieu, and not a whit the less amusing for all that. It was one of the most memorable evenings in the whole private life of Monsieur de Talleyrand. He had been attending the debates of the Manège, and, harassed and wearied with the vast farrago of nonsense which he had heard poured forth for so many hours, was

returning home with the intention of going early to bed, when, in the middle of the street, his arm was seized by one of his old associates, the Chevalier de Fénélon, who, according to custom, was hurrying to the faro-table, and who pressed M. de Talleyrand to join him, declaring that he had spent the day in combinations and calculations to ensure winning, and that he was convinced that if he could only put them to the proof that very night, he was *en veine* to break every faro bank in Paris. It needed but little persuasion perhaps to induce M. de Talleyrand, in the frame of mind in which he then was, to yield to the temptation, and he followed the chevalier with no feeling save that of curiosity, never intending to play himself that night, but to act merely as spectator of the wondrous success of his companion. The house chosen by the latter as theatre of his anticipated exploits was the *tripot* in the Palais Royal, known even then as the famous '*Cent Treize.*'

"Fénélon, whose reliance on his own resources was proverbial, seated himself at the long roulette table with perfect ease and confidence, while M. de Talleyrand, who knew the deplorable state of his friend's finances at the time, stood behind him,

trembling for his fate, and watching with anxiety every roll of the balls, every slide of the shovel. One—two—three passes had been played, however, and the chevalier, according to his own anticipation, won on, consulting at each call from the croupier the slip of paper which he held in his hand, and upon which were scrawled his calculations concerning the chances of the game. This success did not at first attract any extraordinary attention. Examples of luck in the outset were but too common; but when hit after hit was made, and still the chance remained the same, whispers began to float around the table that all was not fair and as it should be. The chevalier heeded not the effect that his extraordinary run of luck had produced, but continued in silence to sweep the gold into a heap before him, regarding perhaps with an undue share of that malicious enjoyment in which it was his wont to indulge, the astonishment and discomfiture of his opponents.

"It was evident that this state of things could not last long; the murmurs of the players, the manifest terror of the bankers, were beginning to disturb the game, when presently one of the croupiers came between the friends, and with pale and

trembling lips whispered in the ear of the winner a few words which made him start. A warm conversation, still in the same mysterious whisper, was for a few moments carried on between them; and finally, after various signs of supplication on the part of the croupier, and of doubt and hesitation on the part of the chevalier, it was announced to the assembled players that M. de Fénélon would retire from the contest upon payment of the sum still left in the bank, which could be subscribed among them, and thus diminish the loss to each so as to be scarcely felt by any.

"This singular proposition, unheard of in the annals of the gaming-table, was received with the most profound indignation and astonishment on the part of the losers, but Fénélon himself undertook to prove that they could not lose, but must be the gainers, as his *veine* would most assuredly break the bank at the next roll of the balls. After some few uncouth exclamations on the part of the gentlemen, and a little pouting on the part of the ladies, the matter was carried. Fénélon was 'paid off' by a subscription, and dismissed with many a muttered curse from the honest and reputable assembly.

"Upon leaving the gaming-house, the chevalier's joy became uproarious, and he trod the silent streets, reeling with laughter at the whimsical trick which Dame Fortune had condescended to play him. He chinked the gold in his pockets until it rang again, and made his companion dread lest the sound should be overheard by any of those nocturnal marauders with whom the streets of Paris at that time abounded. He even threw a handful of the coin down the grating of a cellar, for the sake of wondering what the occupants of the miserable hole would think of such good luck when they should awake the next morning. M. de Talleyrand, who never could endure any kind of midnight brawling, was right glad when they had reached the residence of his friend, and wished him good night with hearty good-will, content to be rid of his uncouth laughter and joyless gaiety.

"But Fénélon was not at all disposed to acquiesce in his friend's desire for rest and quiet. The excess of good fortuue had wrought the same effect as an excess of wine. He was as much excited as though he had been drinking the whole night; and when it came to the parting at his own door, he would not hear of M. de Talleyrand's re-

turning without recruiting his strength for the remainder of his walk by a libation in honour of the propitious fates. Had it been day-light, he would have immediately laid out the whole of his winnings in some wild and fanciful gala to his friends. M. de Talleyrand needed some little pressing to enter. He was tired and sleepy; giddy, too, with the noise and rattle of his companion, and longed to be at home and to be at rest. However, there was no resistance possible, and before he could even form an excuse for retiring, he found himself comfortably seated in the *roué's* own private sanctum, whither few of his sex, and certainly none of his calling, had ever penetrated before. Champagne was now called for; the rouleaux were displayed in piles upon the table; every taper in the girandoles was lighted; a roaring fire was soon kindled on the hearth; the clock on the mantelpiece, which marked two, was stopped by a jerk from the chevalier's finger; and the cards were brought from the drawer of a book-case in the corner of the chimney.

"M. de Talleyrand was but little prepared for the excitement of cards; the very sight of them was sickening, after the long hours spent at the

tripot, and he at once declined the game, expressing his intention of withdrawing without further delay, as he had much business to transact in the morning. But Fénélon laughed, as well he might, for none ever escaped who had once fallen into his clutches, and he filled the glasses with champagne, all the while sorting and dealing the cards for piquet, as if his friend had not uttered a word; then looked at his game, called out "seven for a point," and tossed off a bumper, while he waited for the answer. This *sang-froid* was irresistible. M. de Talleyrand, although grumbling at his own fatigue and the lateness of the hour, took up the cards spread out before him, and was soon interested in the chances of the game, which seemed at first to be as much in favour of his adversary, as they had been already at the Rouge et Noir table.

"'What are our stakes?' said Fénélon, presently; "it is for you to propose, as the luck seems to be all mine to-night.' 'They must be small, indeed,' said M. de Talleyrand, drawing out his purse, which contained but little, and throwing it carelessly on the table. 'Done!' cried the chevalier, turning its contents out upon the green-cloth. 'Come, courage; double or quits until morning!'

This first trial of skill was in a few moments decided in his favour, and he swept the contents of the purse, as he had done the louis-d'ors of the gaming-house, into his own heap, which seemed destined to grow monstrous.

"M. de Talleyrand played on, and grew more resolute as his adversary grew more ironical and insolent. He lost his watch; his chain and seals; the ring which he had saved amid all his embarrassment and poverty, during his uncertain wanderings in foreign climes; he lost the very buckles off his shoes, and the knee-clasps from his inexpressibles, and at last rose from the table, declaring that he must now go home, as he had nothing more to lose. 'Pardon me,' laughed the chevalier, 'you have yet another stake against which I have no objection to venture this heap of gold, without counting. M. de Talleyrand still denied the possession of any article of value; but the chevalier pointed to his breast-pin—a long gilt pin surmounted by one of those scarlet berries with a black spot at the extremity, which we call *grains rouges d'Amerique.* M. de Talleyrand objected that the article was not worth a franc; scarcely, indeed, a few sous. It had been the gift of a negress at Philadelphia, and it was

by a singular mistake that he had placed it in his bosom, instead of the one of great value which he usually wore. He had changed his dress at twilight, and, in passing his hand over the toilet-cushion, had drawn forth the trumpery ornament which he now displayed, instead of the emerald he had apparently mislaid when he had changed his cravat. The circumstance, which had been considered a freak on his part, had even attracted the attention of a neighbour at the club, who had pointed it out to him, and who had been much amused by the surprise which the discovery had occasioned.

"M. de Talleyrand vainly urged the utter worthlessness of the trinket. The chevalier was in high glee, and, insisting upon its following the rest of the spoils, placed it beside the goodly heap of gold upon the table, chuckling all the while with that irritating irony which would long before have dashed into fury any temper less calm than that of his companion. But M. de Talleyrand laughed with him, and, as he disengaged the pin from the plaits of his neckcloth, merely related how that, having saved the black cook at the house where he lodged, at Philadelphia, from a severe punishment,

she had given him this bauble as a precious remembrance of her gratitude. It had been charmed by the Obeah man, she had told him, and was considered a talisman against evil fortune. ...

"'It has not answered to-night, at all events,' exclaimed the chevalier. 'The devil's charm which *you* carry is stronger than the Obeah-man's!' replied M. de Talleyrand; and they began their game once more. The cards were this time more favourable; but Fénélon lost the hard-fought battle with good grace, and whistled merrily as he cut the cards to his adversary. How shall I tell you what followed? It seems so strange a tale, that you will hesitate to believe it, and yet I give you my honour that it is true. The first game was won by M. de Talleyrand—the first during the whole evening, and it was with a nervous eagerness that he snatched up his trumpery pin, leaving the gold which the chevalier had staked to be doubled in the next hand, for again was Talleyrand the winner. The tide of fortune had turned. He went on winning, without intermission, until near daylight, when the whole of the gold which had been won at the gaming-house was transferred from the pocket of the chevalier to that of his friend!

"M. de Talleyrand had several times requested leave to depart, but Fénélon had obstinately refused to allow him to withdraw, so long as there remained a single louis on the board or a single trinket in his possession. It was five o'clock when the adversaries at length rose, M. de Talleyrand, embarrassed with his success, the chevalier mortified and crest-fallen, when the latter, with a sudden inspiration, thumping his fist upon the table, exclaimed, 'One more trial, and I have done! I *must* have that confounded breast-pin! By all the powers, the Obeah-man was right; it is that which brings the luck!'

"'But what have you to stake against a trinket of so much value?' returned M. de Talleyrand, endeavouring to laugh away the impression which, in spite of himself, the occurrences of the evening had made upon his mind. 'Look round the room,' was the answer, 'choose any article you like; I feel sure that this time I shall win it; for it was when you were at your wit's end that fortune changed!'

"M. de Talleyrand looked round the room, but it was only for form's sake. He had already in his own mind chosen his booty. It was a small silver urn, of antique form and most deli-

cate workmanship. Its weight and value did not seem very great, neither was it chiselled or adorned in any manner, but its form was so graceful and elegant, its proportions so exquisite, that it could not fail to attract the eye of a connoisseur, and he named it with less compunction from a knowledge of the smallness of its intrinsic value. The moment he mentioned it, however, all the desperate gaiety of the chevalier seemed to have received a sudden check. He started, and set down the glass he was about to raise to his lips, and, looking full and steadily into the face of his companion, while, however, his lips quivered slightly, and his voice was much subdued, he answered, 'You have fixed upon the only thing from which I cannot—I dare not part. I could not risk the loss of that little vase were all the riches in the universe staked against it.'

"M. de Talleyrand was much astonished to find that there was anything in the world to which Fénélon attached importance, and rallied him upon the discovery; but, surprising to say, this jest was not met by the usual spirited rejoinder. His companion answered not, but calling for more champagne, swallowed a tremendous bumper at a single draught.

"M. de Talleyrand, of course, could offer no objection to this reasoning, and with a heavy purse and lightened heart he bade his friend good night, and left the room. Scarcely, however, had he reached the outer door of the apartment, when the valet-de-chambre, who had been fast asleep in the ante-chamber, came running after him, with a request from his master that he would return. The chevalier was standing over the fire, leaning against the chimney, and clasping the urn, which he had taken from the book-case where it had reposed, close to his heart. In an instant, M. de Talleyrand could perceive that the bottle which he had left upon the table was now emptied; and, as Fénélon turned towards him, he was startled at beholding his discomposed and agitated countenance. 'I have changed my mind,' said he; 'this may be to me what the pin is to you. I have resolved to try its magic influence against that which has protected you. Speak not a word—ask me no question—I shall deem the slightest remark as a summons to meet you in the *Bois de Boulogne*, with witnesses and loaded weapons!'

"M. de Talleyrand did as he was requested; he placed his *enjeu* before him; but he observed that

Fénélon grasped the urn with trembling fingers, until compelled to lose his hold in order to survey his game. A frightful oath—frightful from the compressed energy with which it was uttered, flew from his white lips as he looked at his cards; and, with the instinct of an experienced gamester, beheld his fate. By a really extraordinary chance, it so happened that this time the cards held by M. de Talleyrand were what he calls *fabuleuses—pique, repique* and *capot* were carried in the one hand, and the chevalier sat amazed and stupified, not having been called upon to count a single point. He rose from the table in desperation, and seized the urn, which M. de Talleyrand remarked he had removed from the table with almost religious care when the game began, and handed it to his friend, but at arm's length and with averted gaze. The prince had not courage to pursue the torture, and he said, as he waved it back, 'Do not press me to accept the trinket, M. de Fénélon. Take it, I beseech you, as a gift from me; 'twill be but an earnest of the rest of all I have won of you, for you are sure to have it back again. You know well that I always succeed in keeping my winnings just long enough to make the loss of them more severely felt.'

"'No!' returned the chevalier, fiercely; 'what is lost is lost. It is your right to keep the bauble, and I ask favour of no man. Away with it, then! To demur in taking up your lawful gains is to give offence to the loser.'

"'Well, as you like,' returned the prince; 'but remember, I hold the urn at your disposal should you alter your determination.'

"He took the vase, and placed it beneath his coat. The wistful gaze of the chevalier smote him to the very heart; but, after the fierce manner in which his attention had been received, he sought no second rebuke, and was about to depart; when suddenly, to his great surprise and alarm, the chevalier rushed forward and tore it from his grasp, exclaiming, in a tone of the most bitter rage, 'By the Lord, I am a fool. I played for nought but the urn. 'Twas the urn alone I lost. You cannot deny that'—and he cast a furious glance towards his astonished guest; 'you said not a word of the *contents*. They are mine by every law; you *dare* not say 'tis otherwise. I defy you to tell me that I spoke of its *contents*.'

"M. de Talleyrand answered not; he was appalled at sight of this sudden outburst of fury,

and Fénélon having, with trembling fingers, succeeded in tearing open the lid which covered the little vase, and dashed it with a violent effort against the side of the chimney, a slender column of dark-coloured ashes, almost impalpable, fell through the small aperture into the fire, where it blazed with a small sparkling blue flame for a single moment, then smouldered into darkness, leaving behind a strong aromatic odour, which seemed to hang heavily on the atmosphere of the room, causing a sensation of sickness and a dimness of the sight. Even this died away before the chevalier had ceased gazing at the spot where the substance had fallen; and M. de Talleyrand, embarrassed and fearful of giving further offence in the strange mood in which his companion was, once more slowly took up the urn and sought the door. He could not avoid turning back to catch one last glance of the Chevalier de Fénélon. He was leaning with his elbows on the mantelpiece and his forehead buried in his hands. The bright light from the tapers in the girandoles fell full upon his countenance and *struck upon the tears* which were rolling down his cheeks, causing them to sparkle and to glisten as they fell.

"The prince closed the door noiselessly, and descended the stairs, full of a solemn wonder at what he had beheld. He grasped the urn with a nervous energy beneath his mantle, and with a trembling dread did he pause beneath the first lamp which hung suspended above the causeway, to examine it more closely, inspired by a far different interest from that with which he had hitherto beheld it. He turned it again and again to the light, but could discern no inscription whereby to gain a clue to guess at its former destination; the same sickening odour of scented oils and aromatic spices greeted him from the unclosed aperture, and it was still heated almost to burning by the careless manner in which the chevalier had held it to the fire, when shaking out its mysterious contents.

"He was about to abandon the search, when, by accident having turned it to replace it in his bosom, a few letters, traced beneath the pedestal, met his eye; he lifted it to the light of the lantern, and read them more distinctly. A few particles of the same dark dust which Fénélon had shaken forth, dropped from the vase upon his hand, and he blew them off with hasty impatience, nor heeded where they fell. The letters traced upon

the silver were in relief. To a stranger they would have indicated nothing, but to M. de Talleyrand they were pregnant with a deep and frightful meaning.

"*C. H.—March 17th.*

"MERCY AND FORGIVENESS!—MISERERE!"

"In an instant, he remembered the story which had been afloat some time before, and which he had treated as an old wife's tale. The beautiful young Countess H——; her husband's jealousy—his violent death by the hand of the chevalier—the wife's despair and retirement to the convent at Louvaine—her subsequent death and legacy to Fénélon, which had caused such condemnation and astonishment. 'Let my body be opened after death,' said she, in her will, 'and let the heart which has beat but for him be reduced to ashes, and let it be thus conveyed to him, so that, when he dies, it may repose within his coffin, for it is his own.' She it was who had designed the vase—she who had chosen the inscription.

"The memory of this event had passed away, and the salons of Paris had been occupied with other subjects of more stirring import; but the whole

story burst at once, with all its attendant circumstances of horror, upon the stricken memory of the prince. The dark stream of ashes and the aromatic odour—the coincidence of the initials and the date—and then the tears which had been wrung even from those eyes burning and blood-shot with riot and debauchery—it was evident that the story which had been told, and which he had doubted when every one else believed, was too true. He replaced the vase within the folds of his mantle with a feeling of disgust and hatred towards the cold-blooded *roué* whose rage for gaming and excitement had led him to commit this sacrilegious deed. He inwardly resolved that no temptation should induce him ever again to associate with the reckless libertine—a promise, however, which he was not very long called upon to keep; for, soon after this adventure, the chevalier was found one morning dead in his bed, having swallowed a strong dose of corrosive acid: fit termination to his wild, unprincipled career."

"And what became of the silver urn?" said I.

"M. de Talleyrand, with true delicacy of feeling, sent it the very next day to the Marquise de Cossé, an old convent friend of the unfortunate victim,

and she, I believe, took the proper means of restoring it to the family."

"And the mysterious pin? Have you ever seen it?"

"I have," replied C., laughing aloud; "at least, when I asked the prince concerning its fate, I was shewn a long brassy-looking object, from which all gilding had long ago vanished, and was told that the magical berry had been lost in his various peregrinations. 'Perhaps,' observed he, 'it was stolen by some one who knew its value.' But as the remark was accompanied by the peculiar dropping of the lip and deadening of the eye with which he usually ventures upon a *mystification*, I knew well what to think, and questioned him no more."

My friend paused after he had concluded this strange story, and, beginning to fear lest he had been led away from the original purport of the tale, I reminded him that he had not yet explained to me the particulars of that first interview with Madame Grandt, which had had such a powerful effect on the destinies of the after-life of the prince.

"It was indeed a fitful night," said C.; "one of those wherein the superstitious might easily believe that the devil is allowed to walk abroad and mingle

his curse with the vain projects of aspiring man. It had begun for M. de Talleyrand with a scene of purgatory—it ended with a vision of heaven.

"He hastened home full of the stormy emotions of the interview with Fénélon, and the strange and almost terrific discovery he had made beneath the lantern in the Rue de Montpensier. He was harassed and fatigued; and, eager to gain the quiet and solitude of his own chamber, was hurrying to repose, when, judge of his annoyance—his servant informed him that a lady was waiting to receive him in his study, whose business was of so much importance, that having called late in the evening with the hope of finding him at home, she had preferred awaiting his return, even although it should not take place until dawn, so great was her fear of losing the interview she had come so far to obtain.

It was thus with more vexation than curiosity that M. de Talleyrand entered, therefore, the study—where the stranger, according to the account of the servant, had already been awaiting him for *five* long mortal hours!—without any of the *prestige* which had usually accompanied his introduction to a stranger of the softer sex, perhaps even *his* calm

temper a little ruffled at the unseasonable hour and the unexpected *corvée.*

"The shaded lamp upon the chimney-piece threw but a dim light around the room, and some few moments elapsed before he could even perceive the lady, who was seated in the large arm-chair by the fire, her figure enveloped in the mantle worn at the time, wide but not long, reaching only to the knees, and displaying the gauze and gold tissue of the ball-dress worn beneath. It was evident that the fair stranger, exhausted with fatigue and watching, had fallen into a sleep so sound, that not even the entrance of M. de Talleyrand, nor his approach, nor his convenient fit of coughing, had power to rouse her. A letter addressed to himself lay upon the table, and he opened it, hoping that the noise which he made in moving to and fro would awaken her. It was a letter from Montrond, introducing to his acquaintance the bearer, Madame Grandt, who wished to confer with him upon urgent business, and to seek his advice in an affair concerning which none but himself could give information.

"The name of Madame Grandt immediately awakened all the dormant curiosity of M. de Talleyrand, and he now turned towards the fair stranger

with a feeling of interest far different from that which he had experienced on his entrance. He had heard much of her extraordinary beauty, and had long desired the opportunity of judging whether the reputation were well earned. The whole scene was unique of its kind, and never before had M. de Talleyrand felt so much embarrassment as when the servant, after having in vain endeavoured by every innocent artifice to awaken the lady, left the room with an ill-suppressed titter at the novelty of the situation in which his master was placed. The noise of the door, however, which the cunning varlet took care to close with as loud a report as possible, succeeded at last in awaking the fair stranger, who started to her feet, surprised and terrified to find herself thus discovered in slumber by a stranger, whom, however, she instantly knew to be M. de Talleyrand, from the description which she had already received of his appearance. The impression he produced upon her mind, startled and alarmed as she was at the moment, was one of awe and veneration, while the effect which she created in his was that of admiration so intense that he has called it instantaneous devotion.

"Madame Grandt was at that time in the full

zenith of her beauty, and of the kind of loveliness most rare and most admired in France. I have heard that she was of English origin. This is not true. Her maiden name was Dayot, and she was born at l'Orient; but her connexion with India, where a great part of her family resided, and the peculiar character of her beauty, would seem to have been the groundwork of the supposition. She was tall, and, at that time, slight in person, with that singular ease and languor in her carriage which have been considered the peculiar attributes of the creole ladies. Her features were of that soft and delicate mould but seldom seen in Europe; her eyes, large and languishing, were of the deepest black, while her hair played in curls of brightest gold upon a forehead of dazzling whiteness, pure and calm as that of an infant. Throughout her whole person was spread a singularly childlike grace, which at once interested the beholder infinitely more than the sublime beauty which distinguished her great rivals for the admiration of the worshippers of fashion at that day, Madame Tallien and Madame Beauharnais.

"M. de Talleyrand, who, with remarkable independence of spirit, talks of the princess without the slightest prejudice, observed to me, while de-

scribing this scene, that when she first threw aside her hood and disclosed to view that lovely countenance, all blushing with shame and with surprise, the effect was such that even he, man of the world, *blasé* and *désillusioné* as he already was, felt himself completely deprived, for the moment, of his usual self-possession, and stood before her almost as abashed as she herself. It was some time, indeed, before he recovered sufficient self-command to give utterance to the phrases of politeness usual on such occasions, and to offer his services in whatever manner would facilitate the business concerning which she had sought him at this hour.

"If he had reason to be astonished, first of all, at the singular time of night she had chosen for the execution of her errand, then more astonished still at sight of her wondrous beauty, most of all did he own himself astonished when he came to listen to her description of the purport of her unseasonable visit. With the *naïf* credulity which suited so well with the childlike beauty I have already remarked, she proceeded to relate to him, with much trembling and with tears, all the alarm she had experienced upon hearing the report which

had been afloat at the assembly at Madame Hamelin's, (where she had been spending the evening,) concerning Buonaparte's intended invasion of England, and his promise of delivering up the Bank to pillage as a reward to his successful soldiery. So great, indeed, had been her terror at this news, that she had involuntarily let slip a secret which she had hitherto most religiously kept: 'that, in fact, she had long ago lodged the greater part of her fortune, and the whole of her plate and jewels, in this very Bank of England, which Buonaparte had so generously promised to abandon to the pillage of his victorious troops as the reward of their valour.' This announcement had been received at the assembly with shouts of laughter; and again did she burst forth in bitter weeping when complaining of the cruelty displayed towards her by such untimely levity.

"So great was the power of her tears, that M. de Talleyrand began to press more than ever to be informed in what manner he could be of service in this matter. She then intimated to him that at sight of her grief two or three of her tried and valued friends, foremost of whom stood M. de Montrond, had recommended to her to hurry immediately to M. de Talleyrand, for that he alone had power to save

her property; that, from his situation, he could even make himself responsible for its safe delivery into her hands; and for this purpose M. de Montrond had immediately penned the letter which she had brought, begging her to fly with it immediately to his house, and not on any account to leave it until she had obtained the guarantee.

"Although, of course, highly diverted at the mystification, and somewhat embarrassed at the situation in which he found himself, yet M. de Talleyrand was too gallant to disclose to the fair lady that she had been the dupe of her own fears and of Montrond's insatiable love of practical fun; and in order to quiet her nerves, he instantly drew up in due form a security, signed and sealed, for the safe delivery of her plate and jewels into the hands of any person she might choose to appoint to receive them, as soon as ever Buonaparte's triumphal army had entered the City of London. The fair applicant, highly delighted at the success of her petition, left the house, reading again and again with confidence the writing he had given her, and perfectly insensible to all his gallantry and admiration amid the joy inspired by his kind proceeding.

Such is the history of the first interview of M.

de Talleyrand with Madame Grandt. I know it to be true, for I had it from the lips of the prince himself, who enters with the keenest relish into the ridicule of the whole scene, sparing himself as little as the princess. The mystification was completely successful. Madame Grandt was fooled to the top of her bent by the perpetrators, but the affair had a far different sequel from that which had been anticipated, for M. de Talleyrand became most passionately attached to the fair solicitor, and to the surprise of all Paris, he who had resisted the refined beauty of Madame Tallien, the elegance of Madame Recamier, and the wit and fascination of Madame de Staël, fell an easy victim to the more plain and unsophisticated graces of Madame Grandt. It is certain that not one of the ladies who had laid siege to his heart had managed to obtain so strong a hold upon his affections or to keep them so long; and I can only account for this by the *naïveté* which gave so strong a tinge of originality to all she said or did, so unlike the slavery to forms and etiquette which must ever influence professed 'women of the world,' such as those by whom he was surrounded.

"So much has been said about her ignorance

and stupidity, that they have passed into a proverb, while, in reality, she was neither ignorant nor stupid; but there was certainly an *inexperience* in the social traditions of the world into which she was ushered through the influence of M. de Talleyrand, which gave rise to much amusement among the wits who frequented her society. It would be difficult to account for the strength of the attachment with which, from the very first, she inspired the prince. It certainly was the longest and the strongest that he ever experienced. Various have been the conjectures respecting the causes of his marriage, but the story which was told me by one who was a confidant of the prince at the time, is, I think, the best calculated to unravel the mystery which still hangs over it.

"Madame Grandt was, as I have told you, unrivalled in the tact and *convenance* with which she received company, dispensing politeness to each and all alike, contenting every one, and displaying so much cleverness in her management of the fiery spirits who frequented her *salon*, that it was impossible for those who knew her then to deem her either ignorant or foolish. It was this peculiar talent which had induced M. de Talleyrand, who

was quick both to perceive any peculiar excellence and also to turn it to account, to hold his receptions at her house instead of at his *ministère*. He had already done so for some time without having been subjected to remarks; for the system was, alas! too common at the period to excite the slightest degree either of condemnation or surprise. Fouché, ever on the watch to injure Talleyrand, had taken care to apprise the First Consul of this arrangement. The information, which had excited no interest at the moment, was not wholly lost, however; and a short time afterwards, having been foiled in some of his projects by the policy of England, he sent for Talleyrand, and, puzzled to find a subject which he could use as a pretext for venting his spleen upon his minister, remembered the tale borne by the enemy Fouché. 'It is no wonder that we are abused and vilified by England,' said he, showing a paper in which appeared a scurrilous article upon the First Consul—'when we expose ourselves to such attacks as these, and even our public ministers give public example of disorder and ill-conduct.' The minister looked his inquiry concerning the meaning of this outburst. 'Yes,' continued Buonaparte, waxing

warm, as was his wont, with his own words, like an ill-disciplined schoolboy—'yes, it has reached me that you hold your receptions at Madame Grandt's, and thus the envoys and ambassadors from foreign courts are compelled to wait upon your mistress. This must not continue.' 'Neither shall it,' returned the prince, colouring slightly; 'they shall henceforth be spared; they shall wait no longer on Madame Grandt, but on Madame de Talleyrand; no longer on my mistress, but my wife.'

"The marriage took place before the following week's reception, and it is said that Buonaparte was so vexed and irritated at his own littleness, that he even condescended to *lie* in order to cover it. 'What can have caused Talleyrand's abrupt and extraordinary marriage?' said Barras, one day, soon after the event. 'My *promise* to ask from the Pope "absolution" and the cardinal's hat as a reward for his services,' returned the First Consul, quickly, and immediately changed the conversation.

"Whatever may have been the conduct of Madame Grandt, however reprehensible her facility of morals before her marriage, it cannot be denied that, from the very hour in which this event took

place, it became irreproachable. M. de Talleyrand himself loves to render her every justice on that score. She was too proud of the name she bore ever to disgrace it by any action which she would have deemed unworthy. Like *parvenus* in general, she grew rather intoxicated when arrived at the summit of honour, for, as Princesse de Benevent, her *morgue* and insolence at the court of Napoleon became proverbial, and many amusing anecdotes are told of her absurd pretensions to royal privileges, her pages and her maids of honour, her chamberlain and mistress of the robes.

"I myself once witnessed a curious instance of that total forgetfulness of the '*jadis*,' which seems to be the peculiar failing of persons who have risen from obscurity to rank and fortune. I was one day descending the *perron* of the hotel in the Rue St. Florentine, when a hackney coach entered the court-yard and drove up to the vestibule. I was greatly surprised to behold alighting from it, fine as court robes and towering plumes could make her, the Princesse de Benevent herself. I of course hastened down the steps to offer her my arm on alighting. 'My carriage struck against the lamp-post at the entrance of the Tuileries,'

said she, in answer to my inquiring look, 'and the wheel came off. I was forced to return home in this absurd looking vehicle.' Then turning to the wondering lacqueys, she added, in a tone of disgust and scorn which no language can describe, as she pointed to the coachman, '*Qu'on paie ce malheureux!*' The mixture of the sublime and ridiculous in the tone and gesture by which the words were accompanied, was absolutely irresistible.

"To a mild and conciliating nature like that of the prince, and above all with his keen sense of the ludicrous, such a disposition must have been pecu liarly irritating, added to which, Madame's jealousy of every member of his family to whom he showed affection grew too irksome to be endured, and for their mutual comfort it became advisable to have separate establishments. But even amid the bitterness and soreness of feeling to which such an arrangement cannot fail to give rise in every family where it unhappily takes place, did the prince, with true generosity and liberality of sentiment, endeavour to render justice to her undeviating devotion to his interests, by making a settlement even too magnificent in proportion to his income, more, in fact, than it could comfortably bear. I

frequently saw her after her separation from the prince. So far from having retained either rancour or ill-will against him, there was something touching in the eager interest with which she listened to the slightest details concerning him. She spared not questioning, and seemed never weary of listening to my report of his health and well-being. Everything in her apartment bore witness to her constant remembrance of the days of her happiness and grandeur; the rug before the fire, the embroidered cushion upon which her feet were rested, the lawn handkerchief in her hand, the clock upon the mantelpiece, all bore the impress of the arms of the Talleyrands, and '*Ré que Diou*' shone forth conspicuously on each; while even the little cage wherein reposed a couple of snow-white dormice displayed in its mimic dome and tower a complete model of the château of Valençay.

"She told me, with a frankness I little expected, that she should never cease to regret the life she led here; she could not even speak of the place without tears, and questioned me, with great minuteness, concerning every individual throughout the province; her memory never failing her in

the slightest particular with regard to the genealogy of the different families whose estates lie in the neighbourhood of the château. Her heart seemed to yearn towards the prince, and her expressions of admiration concerning his great talents and wonderful powers of mind were affecting in their truthful simplicity. In spite of the want of elevation of soul, which neither nature nor education had imparted, I still think that the prince entertained a real regard for her, and of many a courteous message from him have I myself been the bearer, whenever it became known at the hôtel Talleyrand that she was labouring under the slightest indisposition. Towards the latter years of her life, however, her pre-occupation concerning all that passed in his household became one of the greatest sources of petty annoyance to which the prince was subjected. For some time before her death, it amounted, indeed, to positive mania. She insisted upon regulating her establishment entirely upon the model of that of the Rue St. Florentin, ruling the minutest details of her domestic economy in imitation of that observed in the prince's household. She even subjected her own diet and hours of taking her repasts to the same system of imita-

tion, and upon one occasion nearly fell a victim to her over-strict observance of the prince's rule of never taking more than one meal in the day.

"As to the innumerable *naïvetes* and *coqs-à-l'âne* which have gone forth to the world as hers, you must not believe one half of them. I think that many of them were invented under the erroneous impression that the surest way of annoying M. de Talleyrand would be to ridicule his wife. It is certain that many of the blunders which are laid to her charge bear the unmistakeable stamp of the firm of Montrond and Co. I once attacked the prince upon the subject, and was much amused at the *bonhomie* with which he laughed at the bare remembrance of all the *bêtises* which so many wits had employed themselves in inventing for the poor princess. I asked him if the story, which has gone the round of every newspaper in Europe, about Baron Denon and Robinson Crusoe, were really true. 'It did not actually happen,' replied he, smiling; 'the circumstance did not really occur as it has been represented, *for I was there to prevent it*. However, it was *guessed at*, and that was enough; the blunder was ascribed to her without compunction.'

"'I certainly remember a *naïveté* which she once uttered in the midst of a circle of savans and literati at Neuilly, which would be considered quite as good and become just as popular were it as generally known. Lemercier had volunteered after dinner to read us one of his unplayed and unplayable pieces. The company had gathered round him in a circle; his *cahier* lay already unfolded on his knees, and, clearing his voice, he began in a high, shrill tone, which made us all start from our incipient slumber, '*La Scène est à Lyons.*' 'There now, M. de Talleyrand,' exclaimed the princess, jumping from her chair, and advancing towards me with a gesture of triumph, 'now I knew that you were wrong; you would have it that it was the *Saône!*' To describe the embarrassment and consternation of the company would be impossible. I myself was perplexed for an instant, but soon remembered the difference of opinion to which she had alluded. As our carriage was crossing the bridge at Lyons, a little time before, she had asked me the name of the river which flowed beneath. I had told her it was 'Saône;' to which she had replied, with a truly philosophical reflection—'Ah, how strange this difference of pronunciation; we

call it the *Seine* in Paris!' I had been much amused at the time, but had not thought it worth while to correct the self-confident error, and thus had arisen this extraordinary confusion in the troubled brain of the poor princess. Of course we all laughed heartily at her unexpected sally; but we were grateful, nevertheless, for it saved us the reading of the dreaded drama, as no one that evening could be expected to *retrouver son sérieux* sufficiently to listen with becoming attention to all the terrible events which Lemercier had to unfold.'

"You see the prince had succeeded in accepting his misfortune *en homme d'esprit*, and the keenest shafts of ridicule must have fallen pointless against one who joined with such hearty good-will in the mirth which was thus raised, without at all agreeing with those who deemed that it was excited at his own expense."

CHAPTER V.

TALLEYRAND'S DESIRE FOR AMITY BETWEEN ENGLAND AND FRANCE — LOUIS DIXHUIT — THE ARCHBISHOP DE M.—MADAME DE KRUDENER—ALEXANDER OF RUSSIA.

JUST as my friend had ceased speaking, the door was opened, and the two valets-de-chambre of the prince, armed with shaving-pot and powder-puff, with the same solemn look as at the toilet of Louis Quatorze, described with such humour by Saint Simon, entered and took their station one on each side the doorway; but when the prince himself entered likewise, in dressing-gown and slippers, leaning on his cane, and bowing low, with a courteous "good morrow," the picture was complete. Le grand monarque in his old age, Fagon and Bréville, seemed to arise before me. I have heard it said that one great test of the temper of a man is the mood in which he awakes from slumber. This

certainly was true as applied to Prince Talleyrand, for perhaps at no other moment in the day was he more lively, more free from care, than at the hour of his toilet. It seemed as if the dreams of the past night had brought with them calm and pleasant recollections, for he was always more disposed to narrate at that moment than during the rest of the four-and-twenty hours. He had soon despatched the business upon which he had summoned me; but he bade me remain, and I was in no hurry to depart; for one by one the favoured few dropped in, and the conversation became interesting enough to make me behold without regret the hurrying off to the wood of a joyous caravan which issued from beneath the gateway with echoes of merriment.

C. had busied himself in turning over the journals, translating from the various English papers the leading article of each, and pausing here and there to extract speeches and opinions most worthy of notice. I shall never forget that morning—it was the last opportunity which was afforded me of judging of the never-failing faculty of that *conteur intarissable*. The conversation had turned upon England, and it was in reference to some observation made in one of the articles which C. had just

been reading that the prince expressed himself towards this country with an admiration and gratitude which I shall never forget.

"It has ever been my dream," said he, "to behold a firm and stable alliance between England and France. I cannot live to behold what I have yearned for all my life long; but *you* may yet be witness to the result to which the events of Europe have all tended for the last three centuries. There are many countries, many climes in Europe; there will soon be but two nations—the English and the French. Before many generations have passed away, they will even stand face to face alone upon the globe. They must become, not only allies, but friends. Already you will perceive that their mutual hatred has become tradition. The wars between these two great nations have often partaken of the chivalrous character of the ancient duel, in which the combat was carried on less from antipathy or thirst of vengeance, than from a boyish valour and love of glory. Believe me, where genius and courage are equal, peace becomes indispensable —two countries cannot make war upon each other until both fall dead upon the field of battle; destruction is not triumph. The good which has

sprung up, even amidst their mutual jealousies, has been immense; much more has been sown than has yet been gathered, but the seed which has thus been buried will bring forth fruit, in its own good time, to benefit the whole human race.

"You will find, by the study of history, that they have proceeded in the goodly work together, as though by a tacit agreement, working with the same perseverance and the same success, to promote the progress of reason and the advancement of prosperity throughout the world. It was at the very same instant that the cry of horror at the tyranny and oppression of the people arose from the heart of each, and hand in hand did their philosophers and men of genius sound the first alarm at the encroachments of despotism. They are destined to regenerate the world."

I may be forgiven if I listened to this eloquent and soothing speech as to a hallowed prophecy. The theme was one upon which I could have loved to hear him expatiate yet further; but other matters soon pressed upon his attention, and drove the subject from his mind. I observed, however, during my stay at Valençay, that the prince took every opportunity of exalting and approving England,

and of putting forth his favourite theory of an *exclusive* alliance between the French and English.

Meanwhile, the toilet was proceeding rapidly under the skilful hands of the two veteran valets; and while I was contemplating with infinite satisfaction a scene to me so novel in its details, the prince, who was in excellent spirits, kept up with even more than his wonted share of vivacity the ball of conversation. Many of the stories which he told that morning were exceeding curious and worthy of record. I was much struck with some observations which he made with regard to the policy and conduct of Louis the Eighteenth, a sovereign whom he disliked most particularly. To one who carried the principle of forgiveness of injuries to the extent to which the Prince de Talleyrand displayed throughout his career, the cold, vindictive nature of Louis must have been singularly obnoxious, while the sense of obligation must have pressed heavily enough upon the small soul of the monarch. Besides which, a rivality of wit had sprung up between them, which served to increase their mutual dislike and distrust of each other. Louis Dixhuit could not bear the *succès* which some of the bon-mots of the Prince had obtained, and sought to

humiliate and embarrass him by direct attacks, as if to put to the proof before the courtiers the well-earned reputation for repartee which the prince had acquired. But the prince always came out of the affray with honour, his self-possession giving him an immense advantage over the irritable temper of the king.

On the day when Madame de Talleyrand (who had been sent to England with a pension) re-appeared in Paris, the king, who seized every opportunity to annoy M. de Talleyrand before the court, exclaimed, on perceiving him, "*Ah, monsieur, que je vous plains!* Is it true that Madame is arrived in France?" "Alas, it is, sire. I also was doomed to have *mon vingt Mars!*" The king did not reply, but walked before the line of courtiers, biting his lip, as was his wont when vexed. Presently he returned, and again stood before the recreant wit, who alone looked all unmoved and unconscious amidst the general hilarity.

"Prince de Talleyrand," said he, in a severe tone, "is it not time for you to seek the country? Paris is growing hot. I have been told that the shades of Valençay are the coolest and most delightful in all France."

"Sire, they have lost that reputation since Ferdinand VII. cut down my lime trees to make bonfires at the Emperor's fête!"

Once more was the king reduced to silence, and this time more effectually, for he did not return again to the charge; but he said to M. Decazes that evening, "Talleyrand answers as though he were *afraid* of an encounter; in short, he always seems as if he considered himself attacked."

I had often felt a desire to know the real opinion of M. de Talleyrand concerning the character of Louis Dixhuit, and I considered myself particularly fortunate that the conversation should have turned upon the subject. It was evident that he held in small esteem the principles of the Bourbon, whose crooked policy and cowardly revenge once drew from him an approval of the memorable words of Fox—"Of all revolutions, the worst is a restoration!" The indignation must have been great which could have caused this bitter criticism upon his own work, for he it was who, by the avowal of the king himself, had planned and executed his great principle of legitimacy, and restored the Bourbons to the throne.

"Louis Dixhuit was the veriest liar that ever

trode the earth," said the prince. "His love of falsehood was so great, that those admitted to his intimacy had grown to dread the expression from his lips of any kindness, feeling sure that disgrace was nigh. He was the greatest hater I ever met with; cold and calculating in his vengeance, and meanly taunting in its gratification. I cannot describe to you my disappointment when I first beheld him in 1814, after the events which had changed him from a miserable exile into the sovereign of the greatest European country. He received me in the palace at Compiegne. I could judge the character of the man by the manner of his greeting. He was in the great gallery of the château, surrounded by his friends and many of the foreign diplomates, who were all eager and *empressé* in their congratulations—all full of hope and bright anticipations of the future. I may, without being suspected of *fatuité*, declare that a murmur of welcome ran through the assembly when my name was announced, and the king advanced a few steps to meet me with a warm and friendly welcome. He pressed my hand with great kindness, and drawing forward a chair which stood beside him, exclaimed, 'Prince de Benevent, be

seated—and believe me, I do not forget that had it not been for your assistance in the late events, they might have turned in a different chance, and *you* might have said to *me*, "Count de Lille, be seated."'

"The phrase appeared to me so artificial, so stiff and embarrassed, that I involuntarily looked his majesty full in the face for an explanation. By that single glance I could tell that I was not destined to remain a minister of Louis Dixhuit, and my anticipations proved true, although he knew well that had it not been for my exertions, he would not have regained his throne until much later—perhaps, indeed, never!

"The dinner which succeeded the grand reception I shall never forget. Everyone had expected that the conversation would have been most interesting; that the most important topic of the day would have been duly discussed and commented upon. Each guest had come prepared with his own peculiar suggestion concerning the most effective entry into Paris. Each one had his bon-mot for approval, some appropriate phrase to be printed in the journals. I myself am forced to plead guilty to the like ambition, and obtained the honour of

preference over many which, in my opinion, were far better and more piquant than my '*Français de plus*,' although its subsequent popularity justified in some measure its adoption. Whatever might have been our anticipations, it soon became evident that the monarch had learned one great accomplishment during his exile, and he ate in silence of every dish which was presented to him. The court, principally composed of men who had been accustomed to the rapid and noisy dinners of the Emperor, soon began to grow weary of the tedious deglutition of the king, and became ere long reduced to be the mere spectators of his enjoyment.

"Not one single word had been spoken during the whole of the first course. It would be impossible to describe the extraordinary effect of that silence, undisturbed save by the timid rattle of the knives and forks, and the hesitating steps of the servants. We gazed at each other with embarrassment. No one dared to speak even to his neighbour save in a whisper; when, just about the middle of the second course, an event occurred which served to arouse us from the stupor into which we had fallen. The king was about to help himself

from the dish of spinach which had been handed to him by the servant, when the intention was suddenly arrested by a loud exclamation from the Duke de Duras, who, rising from his chair, and leaning forward with an earnest and stricken look, exclaimed, 'For the love of Heaven, your Majesty, touch not that spinach!' The king let fall the spoon which was already half way towards his plate, and raised his eyes in alarm—he was pale as death. There were few, indeed, at the table who did not change countenance at this unexpected exclamation. Suspicions of foul treason—of premeditated crime, immediately filled every eye, and we looked aghast towards the duke for an explanation. Even I myself, although prepared by experience for every exaggeration of court flattery, could not resist the dread of some terrible disclosure.

"'*Pourquoi pas?*' faltered out the king, his nasal twang rendered even more tremulous than usual by the terror under which he laboured.

"'Oh, sire, I warn you—be advised by me; eat not of that spinach—it is drest with most villanous butter!'

"The etiquette of the royal table, of course, prevented the explosion of the roar of laughter with which the speech would have been greeted had it

not been for the mighty presence; and even as it was, an irrepressible titter ran round the room. The king, however, did not laugh; the subject was of too much importance to be trifled with; he looked first at the Duc de Duras with an expression of doubt, then raised the dish to his nose, pushed it from him with a sigh, and exclaiming, '*C'est pourtant vrai!*' sank back in his chair to brood upon his disappointment.

"After this event, the silence certainly continued still, but not the embarrassment, for, during the rest of the entertainment, we were all convulsed with suppressed laughter, and although of course good breeding and the rules of etiquette prevented its explosion, the conviction that we mutually understood the joke made us feel its relish the more keenly. The dinner concluded while this ludicrous impression lasted, and we retired to the drawing-room, glad to be emancipated from the restraint which sitting thus face to face with royalty always occasions.

"After a moment's consultation amongst ourselves, we decided that it would be advisable to proceed at once to business, as many of us wished to return to Paris as soon as possible, to forward the measures concerning the public entrance of his

majesty into the capital. I was spokesman upon the occasion, and ventured to suggest the propriety of at once opening the discussion at which we were all come prepared to be amicable wranglers. To our great surprise, his only answer was, '*Let us digest first;* we will speak of business another time.'

"I leave you to imagine the effect produced by these words. The action which accompanied them was even more expressive of his earnestness in the pursuit which he recommended, for he sank calmly down among the cushions of the sofa, and in another moment, before our astonishment had subsided, was lost in the sweetest and most quiet slumber I ever witnessed. It was a source of the greatest amusement to us all, as we moved noiselessly about the room, and spoke to each other by signs or in low whispers in order to avoid interrupting the important slumbers of the sovereign, to behold from the windows of the palace the eager expectation of the crowd assembled in the court below, whose anxious countenances, lighted up by the glare of the illuminations which decorated the frontage of the building, gave token of the intense interest with which they were regarding the moving shadows of those within.

"No doubt they deemed that the proceedings there taking place were big with the fate of the empire—the destiny of thousands of their fellow-countrymen. Each time that any form of more than ordinary dimensions happened to pass before the windows, it was immediately taken for that of the king, and was greeted with loud shouting and applause, which, however, failed to reach the ear of him for whom it was intended, and who still slumbered on, all unconscious either of the disappointment of those within or the expectation of those without.

"This apparently insipid and eventless dinner was to me one of the most extraordinary and interesting I ever remember, and it has remained a *souvenir*, when others, more remarkable for the wit and spirit of the guests or the generosity of the entertainer, have long ago been forgotten. It placed me at once *au courant* as to the views and habits of our 'restored sovereign.' In no one of the anticipations formed from this interview was I deceived. Selfish, insensible, luxurious, ungrateful, did I ever find him. This dinner at Compiegne was the very picture of his whole reign, and he fully justified the words of my honest friend Dunoyer—'Among

the millions of human lives confided to his charge, there is but *one* of value in his eyes; and that one the most valueless of all to the whole world besides.'"

"This repast must have equalled in its interest the famous dinner of the Consulte, eh? you remember, prince?" said the Count de Montrond, who had been listening attentively.

"Indeed, I do remember, and more's the pity," returned the prince, with a gentle laugh, "and I often wish that I could forget the circumstances attendant on that dinner. People talk of the *sublime* and ridiculous; but the *horrible* and ridiculous which were mingled in that scene rendered it altogether one of the most powerful and extraordinary of any I have ever witnessed, either mimicked on the stage or played in real life. I must tell you that I had considered myself extremely fortunate in my transactions with the representatives of the different Italian States who had assembled at Lyons to negotiate for the protection of their liberties by France. There remained but one clause of our treaty to be disputed—the most knotty point of all, and the one which I felt would exercise my utmost powers of persuasion when it

came to be discussed in council. In order to conciliate as much as possible the opposing belligerents, I had been obliged to have recourse to the bait which seldom fails, if well ordered and well executed, that of a *diner diplomatique*, trusting to my worthy ally, Carême, who, in cookery, had talent enough in his own person to finish what our united talents in diplomacy had so well begun.

"The dinner, then, was decided on; the day had arrived; and I was alone in my study, composing myself for the great struggle which was about to take place, when M. de la Bernardière came hurrying in, pale and breathless. 'Well, we have committed a pretty blunder,' said he; 'only see; with all the "very clever men" by whom we are surrounded, what great fools we must be.' He placed upon my desk an open letter which he had just received. It was from the secretary of the Archbishop of M—— to M. de la Bernardière, who was then supposed to be acting as *my* secretary. A letter purporting to be written in the strictest confidence, from 'one gentleman to another,' from a secretary to a man of honour, holding the same important office, having the same ministerial functions to fulfil, &c.; containing a sort of mys-

terious warning; a kind of covert denunciation against the whole proceedings of the Consulte; a threat of failure in all our schemes; an assurance that all the ambitious views of France were perfectly understood; and the letter concluded by declaring that they would be unmasked if the Archbishop of M—— were not invited to the dinner! I must own that this announcement took us rather by surprise; we had reckoned upon the Archbishop of M—— as one of the firmest allies of France, and it was, indeed, by a most inconceivable *bévue* that he had been left out. It must have occurred, no doubt, through some awkward mismanagement on the part of the servants; but, whatever the cause, and it was then too late to enter into any examination, it became evident that the remedy must be applied at once, and that the company of the archbishop must be secured without delay.

"It was M. de la Bernardière, then, who was commissioned to be the bearer of our humble excuses for the neglect of which the servants had been guilty, and our humble request that his Grandeur would overlook the awkwardness of our domestics, and accord us the advantage of his pre-

sence at the dinner, which certainly would not be complete without his company. I must confess that I awaited the return of La Bernardière with the greatest anxiety, as I was quite as fully aware of the necessity of securing the good-will of the Archbishop as the officious secretary himself could possibly be. La Bernardière, however, returned triumphant, and the description which he gave us of his visit added to the amusement caused by our groundless fears. He had found the archbishop attired in flowered dressing-robe and broidered slippers, reclining on an ottoman of curious workmanship, which had been presented to him on that very morning by a deputation of the manufacturers of the good city of Lyons, and the scene altogether had reminded him of an episode of the middle ages. His Grandeur the Lord Archbishop was a singular-looking personage; the melancholy expression of his countenance contrasting with ludicrous effect with the fat, rubicund jollity of his form and features. He was a large, heavy man, with a look of absolute despair, and perpetual groans issued from his brawny chest, like the angry bellowings of Mount Vesuvius. At his feet were seated, on a low stool, two young boys, who were chant-

ing from the same book, and whose rare false notes were now and then punished by a smart kick behind, from his grandeur's peaked slipper.

"He sighed sorrowfully when La Bernardière was announced, and received him with many a lugubrious lamentation on the miserable weather, which, by the bye, was beautiful; then he groaned deeply at the badness of the music of the mass at the cathedral on the day before, which, being of the very best order, and under the superintendence of the maëstro di capello of the Emperor of Austria, had been by every one else considered excellent; then he moaned at having been induced to leave his own country to come to such a place as Lyons, where it was evident his presence was neither sought nor needed, and finally pronounced a most bitter archiepiscopal curse upon the miserable fare of the hotel where he was staying, regretting, with most sublime energy, that he should ever have been induced to travel without his own cook, and vowing before the Virgin that he never would do the like again.

"This was the opportunity for La Bernardière to press his suit and to pray forgiveness for neglect, and to urge his presence at our table with many

an assurance of the utter discomfiture and despair which his refusal would occasion. The countenance of the worthy archbishop lighted up at the mention of the dinner. He was evidently a *bon vivant* of the first class, and it was doubtless to this quality that he owed both the rotundity of his person and the mournful discontent under which he laboured. He apparently deemed, however, that a little hesitation was necessary to preserve his dignity in the eyes of La Bernardière, and he summoned his secretary to learn from him if it were possible to accept an invitation upon so short a notice—if there were no other engagement to interfere with his desire to prove his respect and consideration for M. de Talleyrand by accepting both the invitation and the excuses so courteously conveyed. Of course the secretary was too well schooled to decide precipitately; he had to consult his registers, his list of invitations for the week, &c.; however, La Bernardière soon perceived that there was little danger of refusal. The prospect of a real French dinner, Carême and Minguet, was too much for the philosophy of the archbishop; and as La Bernardière had anticipated, he ended by not only accepting the invitation, but almost excusing himself for having hesitated.

"It was a real satisfaction to learn the acquiescal of his grandeur, for we had waited in fear and trembling the return of La Bernardière. It was immediately resolved among the little knot of gentlemen gathered in the salon that it would be necessary to display even more courtesy towards him at the dinner-table in consequence of this involuntary neglect; and thus, much to my subsequent discomfiture, it was agreed that the poor archbishop was to be placed at my right hand. I was exceedingly diverted at the extreme self-complacency with which he received all our demonstrations of respect, all our contrivances to do him honour—a mixture of embarrassment and haughtiness which I have never seen equalled. But at sight of the dinner all stiffness and formality were banished. His heavy countenance brightened, and he exhibited the most lively interest in every arrangement, tormenting me terribly to know the name of every dish which was handed to him, then questioning the servant who presented it upon the nature of the ingredients employed in its composition, and finally calling, in a shrill tone, for 'Nino,' the short fat man who stood behind his chair, dressed in a livery which, I believe, is called heraldic, and which is all striped and cross-barred

with every colour in the rainbow—red, yellow, blue, white, as many, in short, as there may be quarterings in the escutcheon, producing an effect more resembling that of the pictures on playing cards than anything else that can be imagined.

"This 'Nino' would stoop forward and lean his chin upon the shoulder of his grandeur, and his grandeur would point with a fat, white, stumpy finger to some particular dish upon the table, and after a few moments whispered conversation between the pair, Nino would disappear for a short time, and then return all in a heat and blaze. He had evidently been despatched to the kitchen for information respecting the origin and composition of the approved *morçeau*, in order that it might be reproduced at some future time upon the archiepiscopal table. His delight at every new discovery of this nature was perfectly uncontrollable, and he would chuckle and clap his hands like a child whenever a fresh dish, wearing a tempting exterior, was placed before him.

"To me his grandeur was unfolding a new chapter in the eternal history of human eccentricity, and I watched every motion with the most intense interest. Towards the end of the repast, the

ecstasies with which he had greeted the endeavours of our French *artistes*, and, perhaps, also the enormous efforts which he had used to prove his admiration of their talents, had produced a state of excitement which rather began to alarm me, the more so as even La Bernardière had not been able to win a moment's attention, so absorbed had his grandeur been with the culinary excellence of our political system. Every dish had been discussed by the archbishop; neither *entremets* nor *hors d'œuvre*, however insignificant, had escaped investigation, until, at last, I grew perfectly amazed at the quantity which had been absorbed, and perceived, with an indescribable feeling of terror and dismay, the hue of dark purple, which, beginning with his ears, had gradually overspread his whole physiognomy, and more particularly the look of stolid dulness with which he now eyed the table.

"'Your grandeur is ill,' said I, in a whisper; 'allow me to order yon window to be opened above your head, or would you prefer to retire for a moment to breathe the air upon the staircase?'

"'No, no,' returned the archbishop, 'I have not finished dinner yet,' and immediately helped him-

self most copiously from a dish of *artichauts à la Barigoul*, (a dish for which, by-the-bye, my cook was famous,) and fell to eating once again, as if refreshed by the pause he had been compelled to make. I was verily astounded! His grandeur seemed to have reserved all his energies for the *artichauts à la Barigoul*, and devoured them with as much gusto as though he had eaten nothing since morning.

"It was during the mastication of this most approved morsel that La Bernardière at last succeeded in making the little request in favour of our country which had been hovering on his tongue during the whole of dinner. His grandeur hesitated not; he was ready to grant everything; he could refuse nothing to any one in this hour of plenitude and satisfaction, and I, in my turn, plied him with propositions and demonstrations, to all of which he assented by a dignified inclination of the head. Emboldened by the view of my unexpected success, La Bernardière took up the burden of my discourse, with an increase of vigour and an increase of presumption, as is invariably the case with solicitors when undisturbed by opposition. Question after question was proposed to the arch-

bishop, who assented to all our demands in the same quiet manner, until I advanced *le point culminant* of our requests, which really did seem to stagger him, for he raised his head suddenly, and remained an instant gazing on me with a vacant stare, then bent forward, as I thought, to whisper his objections more closely into my ear, and to my terror, as I looked up to listen for his answer, fell forward with his face upon my bosom, without sense and without motion, the dull, gurgling sound in his throat alone giving assurance that life still remained!

"I cannot describe to you the alarm and horror of that moment. I could not shake him off. I had not strength to move the weighty mass. I dreaded, of all things, making a scene and disturbing the whole company, and called as loudly as the immense weight pressing upon my throat and bosom would allow me to do, for 'Nino!' But, alas! Nino had been deputed to the kitchen a few minutes before in search of the receipt for the *artichauts à la Barigoul*, and I was, therefore, compelled to support this ponderous mass unheeded, unobserved. In spite of the alarm and the personal inconvenience which I felt, for the

big drops of perspiration were rolling down my face, and every muscle was strained to the utmost, yet was there something so ridiculous in the whole scene, that had it not been for that livid countenance so close to my own, those goggling, protruding eyeballs so close to mine, it would almost have created laughter; but it was too horrible! I shall never forget the expression of that face; it will haunt me to my dying day.

"How long I might have remained in this ludicrous position I know not, for every one was busy and boisterous, chatting and laughing with his neighbour; even the traitor La Bernardière had turned away and was now in full heat of a good story, which he was recounting to his companion on the other side, leaving me, as he imagined, fully occupied with the seduction of the archbishop. At length my deliverance was accomplished, the ever-watchful Nino, all breathless and panting hot from the kitchen, perceived my danger even from the door of the banqueting-hall, and, bounding across the floor, seized his master by the collar and pulled him backwards with violence into his chair, where he lay, motionless. By a simultaneous movement, as if attracted by some magic spell, the whole

company turned at once towards us;—a cry of horror burst from the guests at the contemplation of that ghastly countenance. The confusion, of course, became general, every seat was abandoned, and the guests crowded round us with recommendations and offers of assistance; but the screaming voice of the piebald 'Nino' was heard loud above the hubbub and confusion. 'Leave him to me; I know him of old. Stand back. Lord, as if this were the first time! You see he only wants to breathe, and he can't, because his teeth are closed.' With these words he seized upon the poor archbishop, and after looking round the table in vain for an instrument, he drew from his pocket a huge iron door-key, and attempted, with the effort of a Hercules, to force it between the set, clenched jaws of the archbishop. But alas! they were already set and clenched in death, and no human power could now avail.

"His grandeur was dead; the melancholy fact was too visible to all present, excepting, indeed, to the obtuse perceptions of 'Nino,' who, in spite of remonstrance and opposition, would insist on repeating his experiment, until at last, with a horrible crash, the strong front teeth of the arch-

bishop gave way; and roused by the certitude of his misfortune, the unhappy Nino burst into a yell of despair which echoed to the very roof of the apartment. I leave you to judge of the effect of the whole scene, and of the extent of the appetite with which we returned to the table when the ugly sight was removed; and yet, no sooner had the ghastly corpse, borne upon men's shoulders, and followed by the howling Nino, passed through the yawning door, than the conversation was resumed, perhaps even with more energy than before: the jingling of glasses, the clatter of knives were renewed with even more noisy glee, and soon, to all appearance, the very memory of the awful circumstance to which we had all borne witness seemed to have been forgotten, for the laughter and the shouting, the eager gesture and the noisy discussion were resumed, as if nought had happened to disturb the harmony of the meeting.

"The due meed of lying toasts were likewise bawled forth; vows for the '*Fraternity of Europe*,' and '*Universal Union*,' &c.; with some few favourite names, were also shouted with much riot and applause. Disputes of the most animated kind, con-

cerning the rival merits of divers of our public men, were also started and quelled, but never once was the subject with which every heart must have needs been full made the topic of a single observation. I observed that many, while loudest and most clamorous in their discourse, would cast a shuddering glance towards the chair which had so lately been filled with the violet robes and portly dignity of the Lord Archbishop, and which stood now empty and reproachful by my side; then, by a sudden effort turn away and grow more clamorous and noisy than before; but, as I have already said, not once was the subject of his miserable death alluded to in any one of the numberless speeches which were subsequently uttered. One would have thought that he had been forgotten on the instant, although his cover still remained upon the board, and his jewelled snuff-box still sparkled beside it. While yet the very presence of the man hovered round us, he was, to outward seeming, as much unthought of as though he had never been."

This story gave rise to others of the same nature, and many were the anecdotes related of sudden death, the summons which startles men

in the midst of revelry and festival, at council-board or in the judgment-seat. Some of these are well known, others would have but small interest for the general reader, but one of the most curious was told by the prince himself with the piquant raciness in which he so much excelled, and which has graven the history in my memory. It happened during a time, too, which possessed a peculiar interest to me—a time which, in spite of its importance, has found but few chroniclers—the period of the occupation of Paris by the allied armies, and the visit of the sovereigns of Europe, in 1815. Men's minds were so agitated by the crowding of events the one upon the other, by dread anticipations of what would come next, that public feeling was taken by surprise, and scarcely had time to set up its own standard, or leisure to record its own impressions; this I take to be the reason why so few of the memoirs of our day contain any special description of the state of society at that time.

"I had been dining with a circle of wary, ever-watchful diplomates of the lesser kind, Russians, Austrians, and Prussians," began the prince; "every word had been weighed in the balance of

prudence and *prévoyance* before I had ventured to give it utterance. Not a syllable of the conversation of others had been permitted to fall unheeded on my ear, and the extreme tension of intellect which it had required, both in weighing my own words and in watching those of others, had, at last, so wearied my mind, that I experienced a feeling of vacancy, an exhaustion of moral power, which might be compared to nothing but inebriation. When the repast was over, I strolled forth on foot to seek my old friend and comforter, Bergasse. I knew by experience that an hour spent with him would restore my spirit to its equilibrium, and soothe, by the counter-irritation of his fund of whimsical argument, the agitation of my nervous system. He was not at home, however, and I was turning away, disappointed, from his lodgings, when his valet, an old confidential servant, followed me with the information, that, if I needed Monsieur very much, he had left word where he was to be found; he had gone to the *soirée* at Madame de Krudener's; it was to be a grand gala night at her house, and the Emperor Alexander was to be among the guests!

"This information of course roused me at once

from the fatigue and lethargy of my diplomatic dinner, and I determined to do that night what I had never done before, in spite of the frequent solicitations of the fair *philosophe* herself, go to 'the *soirée* at Madame de Krudener's;' nay, there was something in the very project which seemed to revive my flagging spirits, and I set forth on my expedition, determined to be amused; this object being already more than half attained by the very determination alone.

"When I arrived in the Rue de Cléry, where Madame de Krudener then resided, I found the street impassable—a crowd of carriages of every description filling it from one end to the other. I immediately perceived among the number admitted into the courtyard the plain green carriage and unpretending liveries of the Emperor Alexander. It is an extraordinary thing how time and place will suddenly tend to the development of certain sentiments, which, even if they have existed before, have, perhaps, been rather repulsed than encouraged. Thus it was with me on the night in question. No sooner had I beheld the pressure of the crowd, the difficulty of obtaining admittance into the sanctum of Madame de Krudener, than I was

seized with an indescribable longing to press forward, and a regret that I had never been to her receptions before. It was some time before I could force my way through the dense mass of visitors which obstructed the staircase. However, in all matters, great or small, everything happens, to those who know how to wait with patience, and my turn did come in due course, and I also found myself ushered into the mighty presence. How different did I find this *huitaine* from those I had witnessed at her former residence!

"The whole scene of former days flashed upon me, as I made my way through the rooms towards the sanctorum wherein the divinity of the place sat enshrined in mysterious and hallowed seclusion. When I had last beheld her, before her departure for Riga, she was in the bloom of youth and beauty; her complexion, of exquisite fairness, bespoke her northern origin, while the delicate and graceful form bore all the softness of the south. The long ringlets of golden hair which shaded her face in such rich luxuriance had been the theme of many an ode and sonnet, while her grace in the dance had made many an unhappy 'Gustave' among the sad *incroyables* of the day.

"I now found her, after a lapse of years, the same in all things, and yet, how strangely altered! Her youth was gone; and her beauty, of which she still possessed some little share, no longer satisfied that ardent thirst of admiration, that morbid, eager craving for popularity, which had possessed her soul from her childhood upwards. She had been greeted with divine honours, and divinity she would insist upon remaining, in spite of the change which had taken place both in herself and in her worshippers. She had exchanged her pedestal of alabaster, wreathed with roses, for one of mere painted pasteboard, and only maintained her *àplomb* upon its narrow surface by the strangest efforts and contortions. It was a curious scene; such a one as I should have thought it impossible to see enacted in the nineteenth century.

"The rooms were crowded; and, with an admirable comprehension of theatrical display, the fair hostess remained in the furthermost of all from the entrance. A space of the width of the doorways through which you had to pass was kept vacant for the approach of strangers. It was thus that, through a long lane of curious gazers, I was e'en forced to wend my way towards the place where Madame de

Krudener sat, in her hallowed and almost solitary glory. In the midst of all that was singular in this extraordinary reception, what struck me most was the unearthly silence which reigned in the assembly. Not a word was uttered above a whisper, and the few greetings of friendly recognition with which I was hailed as I passed through the *seven* chambers, all crowded to excess, were scarcely audible from the low tone in which they were uttered. The room which Madame had honoured with her preference was a very small boudoir at the extreme end of the apartment. I observed in a moment that those which I had traversed were dimly and poorly lighted, although there was animation enough imparted to the assembly by the gay *parure* of the ladies, and the glittering uniforms of all nations, which were gathered there; but the effect was so artistically managed, that, as you looked forward down a narrow, shaded vista, the single point brilliantly lighted—the white dress of the lady became the immediate centre of attraction.

"Madame received me most graciously, and I will confess that it was not without some emotion that I bent low to kiss her hand. She courteously reminded me of former times, and, in the sweetest

tones which ever fell upon the human ear, reproached me gently for my tardy compliance with her oft-repeated invitation. There certainly was something irresistible in her voice and manner; for I, who had come prepared to resist, yielded to the charm without a struggle, and gazed at her with an interest which I had little expected to feel. She was at that time fast verging towards the dreaded forty, and it was even said that it was merely owing to the disagreement in the two calendars that she had not already passed that fatal boundary; and she defended herself, with most amusing earnestness, against the charge brought forward by the evil-disposed persons who accused her of being both 'visionary and quadragenary.' However, time had dealt kindly with her, having left traces of his passage more upon her figure than her face. Both had increased and spread; the bloom and freshness had departed, but wrinkles and suffusion had not yet arrived.

"She was attired in a robe of her own invention, made of some kind of woollen stuff of the purest white, long, full, and flowing, with sleeves which reached to the very ground; the whole was edged with silver, and the robe was confined at the

waist by a silver girdle. Her hair, which was still beautiful as ever, although not quite of so bright a golden hue as I remembered it, hung loose down her back and over her bosom, reaching to the waist in the most beautiful ringlets, which, whether the effect of nature or of art, were well calculated to enhance the expression of her inspired attitudes. There was exquisite coquetry in the manner in which, by a gentle movement, she shook the ringlets from her brow, in order to clear her vision, when any new visitor drew near, and in the peculiarly graceful motion with which she would draw her hand now and then across her eyes, as if to shade the light for an instant, during which the snowy fingers, laden with gems, glistened through the drooping curls with an effect perfectly bewildering.

"She was reclining upon a low divan which ran along the wall, supported by cushions of crimson velvet, which set off her fair complexion and the dazzling whiteness of her dress to the greatest advantage. On one side stood the Emperor Alexander, attired in a suit of black, with no mark of his high rank save the glittering star of brilliants on his bosom. If he had come prepared to heighten the effect of Madame de Krudener's

tableau, he could not have adopted a costume and bearing more in harmony with her intentions. On the other side, leaning backward in his chair, with the most perfect nonchalance imaginable, sat the King of Prussia *en personne*. Before I had recovered from the surprise which the latter discovery had occasioned, my hand was seized in a friendly grasp by my old friend and ally, Bergasse, who, together with a sombre, wild-looking individual, was seated on a low stool at the feet of the prophetess, both having, apparently, been occupied in transcribing the words which fell from her lips, for each was armed with a *calpin* and pencil-case.

"When I had paid my respects to the lady, I was about to retire, as I supposed was the etiquette for casual visitors, but I was destined to feel the advantage of possessing a 'friend at court,' for Bergasse drew me gently back, and led me to a seat in the corner of the room, where I remained an observer, unobserved, of all that was going on around me. Bergasse endeavoured for a moment to satisfy my curiosity by a few brief answers to my whispered questions, but he had no time to waste upon a poor, uninitiated novice like myself, and he soon left me, and resumed his seat by the

side of his necromantic-looking companion. However, from the few short words he had found time to utter, he informed me that I was in great good luck that evening, for Madame de Krudener was in one of her most ecstatic moods, and had already three times experienced the state of *extase*, and, while under this influence, had given utterance to some of the most powerful and most beautiful prophecies and denunciations, which himself and his friend had most righteously transcribed, word for word, and in the order of their utterance.

"'Who is your companion?' said I, pointing to the long, thin figure in black which remained gathered up at the feet of the lady.

"'That is our new *illuminé*,' returned Bergasse, triumphantly. 'It is Jüng Stilling, who has left home, family, and friends, to follow our inspired mistress. I have attached myself to Madame de Krudener from admiration and conviction; he has done so from the sympathy of mystic science, the strongest of all ties. How I regret, my friend, that I began not life as I now am ending it, in communion with the lofty-minded, the inspired. How I grieve now over the time lost, the unambitious aims of my youth! Why come you not with us?

In our existence is true happiness only to be found.'

"What further he would have added I know not, for, just then, the dull, sepulchral voice of Jüng Stilling called him by his name, and he slunk back to his side, leaving me to contemplate the scene before me.

"There was a moment of deadly silence after Bergasse had regained his seat. Madame de Krudener sat motionless, staring with fixed, unmeaning gaze upon the vacant space before her. The Emperor Alexander stood in passive expectation, not a muscle of his features disturbed, while the King of Prussia, who at that time never left his side and never turned his gaze from the autocratical countenance, looked at it now with more intent and searching earnestness. Presently the seeress started from her dream, and slowly arose from the divan where she had been reclining. She waved her arm aloft, while yet her fixed gaze wavered not, and moved a step or two forward. Nothing could exceed the grandeur of her appearance at that moment. The long robe in which she was enveloped, drooped in graceful folds about her person, and the loose sleeve fell back from the ex-

tended arm, and displayed its rounded form and snowy whiteness with most bewitching effect. She spoke—her voice was deep and solemn, and its accents fell with slow and measured cadence on the ear.

"'Let us pray,' said she; then paused; while I could hear from the rooms beyond, and which I had traversed on my entrance, that peculiar agitation and bustle which precedes the change of position in churches. 'Let us pray; all sinners that ye are, sink upon your knees, and beg forgiveness from the God of heaven!' exclaimed she, in a louder tone; and in a moment, while yet she stood with arms uplifted, and with her head thrown back, every person present, from Alexander, the autocrat of all the Russias, to the very waiters who had been handing the refreshments to the company, sank down upon their knees, and bowed their foreheads to the very ground! She herself knelt not, but remained standing, while she poured forth a prayer, spoken in earnest and burning language; words of which I have not been able to recall a syllable to memory, so absorbed was I in contemplation of all that was passing. I verily believe that of all that multitude—for I think there must

have been at least five hundred persons present—there was not a soul save myself who had dared to remain seated; and with me it was neither mockery nor bravado which had caused me to disobey the injunction, but at the moment I was so taken by surprise, so absorbed with the novelty of the scene, that I was scarcely conscious of the impropriety of which I was guilty. To speak truth, I was busy comparing the circumstances now passing before me, with those under which I had last beheld Madame de Krudener; Garat, the opera singer, and Bernardin de St. Pierre were then her supporters. Sounds of mirth and festivity, the light *fiorituri* of Garat, the mildly-caustic declamation of Bernardin, had given place to the solemn tones of the prophetess, the language of love and gallantry to the language of prayer.

"She continued, for the space of at least an hour, in a state of inspiration, never ceasing, during all that time, to hold on her discourse with the same unhesitating eloquence. She spoke of Alexander, 'the white angel of the north,' predicting for him and his descendants, glory, happiness, and honour, unlimited sway from the rising of the sun to the setting of the same. Then did

she revert to the black angel of the south, foretelling that he 'would escape from his second cage like a chained lion.'

"The prophecies were uttered with a self-confidence, an implicit belief, which I could not but admire; it was so well calculated to inspire the same feeling in others. The only drawback was the reflection that none of them had as yet come true.

"This state of *extase* lasted for some time after the prayer was ended, during which the whole assembly remained kneeling. I bent forward and looked through the open door; not a single gesture of impatience, not a single wandering glance could I detect among the crowd. Every head was bent low. Some even kissed the very floor; and it really was a curious sight to behold those dainty ladies, those gaily-dressed courtiers, whose costume of white kerseymere knee-breeches and silk stockings was anything but favourable to the kneeling posture, remain thus without a murmur, so long as it pleased the fair preacher to hold them in expectation that she would resume her discourse.

"The prayer was ended at length, and every one arose, gently, without confusion and without

noise, and sank again into their seats in silent meditation, which continued undisturbed by a single sound for several minutes. The prophetess had fallen back upon her ottoman, and her golden locks completely buried her face beneath their shadow. I would have given much to have been sure of the expression of her countenance, for once I became aware that her eye sought mine, and then I observed that she turned aside to avoid my scrutiny. Bergasse sprang to my side in delight and triumph. 'Is she not splendid?' inquired he, with a naïveté of tone and manner at which I was highly amused. 'You have heard her in her glory to-night,' he whispered in my ear, with an air of the greatest mystery, while his countenance changed from the expression of childish admiration, which it had worn when he had addressed me, to that of awe and wonder—'She has had a *pressentiment*, and is under its influence still.' He took my arm, and walked with me through the crowd into the adjoining room.

"As I left the sacred boudoir, I beheld the 'white angel of the north' in busy conversation with the prophetess, and the unhappy King of Prussia bending forward, eager to catch the slightest syllable which fell from the lips of the speakers;

but the effort was vain; his neck was too short, and his eye wandered from the one to the other with the restless, unquiet look of a person afflicted with deafness.

"Bergasse turned to me as soon as we were alone. 'There is something dreadful about to happen,' said he, in a solemn whisper. 'She has had her *pressentiment* to-night, and she has never deceived us yet. Something awful is about to occur here; in this very apartment, perhaps—in this very room, upon the very spot where we now are standing!' He seized my arm and drew me nearer to his side, then added—'My dearest friend, some one is about to DIE beneath this very roof!' I drew back aghast; but Bergasse seemed too much *exalté* by his subject to care if even he himself were the victim, provided the prophecy of his divinity came true. 'Yes,' added he, with a grim smile, '*she* has felt that death is walking amongst us; he is now, at this moment, choosing his victim. She has insisted on my sending home my nephew. She wished me to depart also, but I must not leave her. Even while I am dallying with you, I am losing the precious words which fall with such sweet unction from her tongue.'

"He left me abruptly, and hurried back to the

boudoir of Madame de Krudener, while I remained lost in astonishment, to think that the man, who had once dealt terror into the heart of the boldest satirist that ever existed—he who had for awhile, by his energy and sarcastic bitterness alone, arrested the headlong progress of Beaumarchais, and turned the popular tide of ridicule against him who had so long ridiculed all things with impunity, should have thus become, in his old age, the puling slave of a self-deluded impostor, who was prompted in the comedy she was playing by the wild vagaries of the ex-tailor, Jüng Stilling. I left the soirée with feelings of mingled pity and disgust, to which was added, a strange suspicion concerning the motive which actuated the 'white angel of the north' in thus making this public display of his admiration of the prophetess, and consenting to be made one of the *coryphées* in the theatrical representations she was thus in the habit of giving.

"I was scarcely awake the next morning, when Bergasse rushed into my room, exclaiming, in a tone of triumph, 'She did not deceive—it was true—the *pressentiment* was justified! Why did you not stay till later?—you would have *seen* the truth with your own eyes, and have been an unbeliever

no longer.' With the artful tact of a professed marvel-monger, he allowed me time for reflection after he had pronounced these words, and then resumed, as soon as he perceived that I had collected my wandering senses.

"'You were no sooner gone, my friend, than her inspired prophecy of last evening was fulfilled. I was seated where you had left me, at her feet, when a young man of the Neapolitan embassy, who had been hovering around the door, gathered sufficient courage to enter the boudoir and make his bow to Madame de Krudener. His name was Carascola; he had arrived but a few days since from Naples. Madame de Krudener had known his mother, and in courtesy and kindness felt in duty bound to ask him some few questions concerning the prospects and intentions which had led him to Paris. He had answered her questions with that embarrassed timidity with which young men are used to reply to their superiors, and Madame de Krudener had already dismissed him, and turned again to the "white angel of the north," whose conversation had been interrupted by the young man's entrance, when suddenly she started from the sofa as though a pistol-shot had been fired through her

brain, and darting on me a look of terror, she exclaimed, faintly, "Bergasse, the hour is come—nought can save us from the approach of our Sovereign Lord and Master. He is here—his choice is made." At that very instant, I give you my honour as a gentleman, I beheld Carascola, who was leaving us, full of youthful spirit, to gain the outer room, fall forward upon the floor, without stumbling, without resistance, without convulsion, but rather as it were sink down softly as though seeking repose, and there lie stretched his full length, without sense and without motion. A crowd soon gathered round him, and they raised him up; his countenance was pale and his features frightfully swollen, even in that minute; a doctor who was present opened a vein upon the forehead, but it was all of no avail. She had spoken truth. Death had chosen his victim, and that victim was Carascola.'

"Such was the tale which Bergasse had come so early to my bedside to tell me. I ascertained, that very day, that it was true in every particular, and was certainly an extraordinary proof of the possibility of an almost supernatural coincidence. I doubt not that Madame de Krudener had often

experienced these *pressentimens* before, but I much doubt whether any one of them ever came true so rapidly, so *àpropos*, as in this case. The young man had evidently been in a bad state of health, perhaps subject to fits, from his childhood, and on this occasion the excitement of meeting with the august personage he had come to visit, the heat of the room, the emotion of the prayer and prophecies, must have caused a congestion of the brain. I can, however, vouch for the entire truth of the fact I have related; you must yourselves arrange the causes, according to your own scepticism or powers of belief."

The prince arose as he concluded his story; his toilet was completed, and he was released from his tormentors. I was sorry to behold the morning conference thus breaking up, for I could have listened on until sunset. I dared, however, to hazard one single question. "Did you ever see Madame de Krudener after this?"

The prince bit his lip slily. "Never so close as on that night," returned he; "but from a distance, as such great luminaries should only be gazed at by vulgar mortals like ourselves. It was at the review of Alexander's troops in the *plaine des*

Vertus, a ceremony of which she has left us such a flaming description. But alas! already was she no longer the object of exclusive adoration to the 'white angel of the north,' for I observed that his head was often close under the pink bonnet of Madame du C——, while the yellow ringlets and broad straw hat of Madame de Krudener were left to float unheeded in the wind. The purpose for which he had been playing the comedy of such assiduous attendance at her prayer-meetings was evidently answered, and he cared no longer to expose himself to ridicule for her sake. Soon after this, she left Paris for ever, and I beheld her no more. But my niece, who, like many of her sex, was infatuated with the eloquence and talents of Madame de Krudener, followed her to the Greuzacher Horn, whither she had retired. Here she sank lower in the scale, and no longer preached to kings and emperors, but to an immense army of ragged proselytes, whom her generosity in alms-giving, more than her pious exhortations, had drawn around her. This same army followed her, I believe, in all her wanderings, and I am told that at her death the little colony established itself at Karasoubazar, where it is flourishing still, and

where almost divine honours are paid to her remains; pilgrimages are performed to her tomb to this very day, and miracles are wrought as freely as at many other shrines.

"It is certain that the game which Alexander deemed it worth his while to play was a deep one, for its object has not been discovered to this very day. I know, from the best authority, that for a long time he counterfeited entire obedience to her commands, fasted, prayed, and wept, beat his bosom and tore his hair when she so ordered it—took the whole responsibility of the absurd and childish project of the Holy Alliance upon his own shoulders—and, in short, gave himself up to the guidance of one whom he feigned to consider as Heaven-inspired. And when the allied sovereigns—who had all, at first, been blinded by the tinsel of the framework of that famous treaty—turned round and laughed it to scorn, shamed by the blunt good sense of England, who had pronounced the document *unintelligible* and refused to sign, Alexander—whether from misplaced *amour propre*, or from real conviction, still remains a mystery—would never consent to withdraw his signature. Whatever may be the merits of the conception of

that mighty work, it certainly sprang from the brain of Madame de Krudener alone; but when complimented upon the stupendous, though 'unintelligible,' design, it was her wont to reply with great modesty, while she flung back her ringlets and looked towards Heaven, 'The Holy Alliance is the immediate work of God. It is He who has chosen me for his weak, uncertain instrument, and it is He who has inspired me with the idea of uniting the sovereigns of Europe in the holy bonds of brotherly love, for the good of the great human family under their charge.'"

The prince had moved towards the door even before his words were quite concluded, and, to my regret, he turned and bowed to us on the threshold, and then passed out. It was the hour for business, and he retired to his own study until the carriage was announced for his morning drive.

* * * *

That very evening, the courier from Paris brought me the summons to repair to my station, which I dared not disobey; that official summons, sealed with the official seal, and stamped with the official *griffe*, which strikes such terror into the hearts of youthful aspirants to diplomatic fame. I have

grown older and wiser since that time, and have in my turn despatched many an official summons to strike terror into the heart of some diplomatic tyro. I have lived to satisfy even my mother's ambitious hopes, and have had my full share both of diplomatic toils and their glittering reward; but I can never look back without an overwhelming gratitude and regret towards the time when, unknown and obscure, I passed those pleasant hours in the society of the great and illustrious Prince de Talleyrand, during that short vacation at Valençay.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LAST MOMENTS OF PRINCE TALLEYRAND.

It was scarcely six o'clock, on the morning of the 17th of May (1838), when I bent my steps towards the old hotel in the Rue St. Florentin, with a mind full of sad misgivings; for when, at a late hour on the evening previous, I had quitted it, I had been but slightly encouraged to hope that another day could possibly be granted to its proud and gifted owner. The dull grey dawn was just struggling to rise above the tall chestnuts of the Tuileries. All was still silent, and as I pulled the heavy bell, its echo reverberated through the vast court-yard with a sound almost unearthly. I did not pause at the porter's lodge to inquire news of the night, for the first object which met my eye was the physician's carriage, and I rushed at once to

the foot of the grand staircase, which I had so often ascended with feelings so far different from those I now experienced. The two stone figures of Silence, which stood on each side of the gigantic portal, humid and dripping with the morning fog, struck a chill to my very soul. Those huge lions, which had so often been compared to the insatiate lions of Venice, now reminded me of those mute and motionless watchers carved by the marble gates of an ancient sepulchre. It seemed as if every object were already enveloped in that atmosphere of death, and that the old mansion, at all times sad and dreary, was already pervaded with the odour of the tomb.

What gave a colouring to this idea was the total silence which reigned around, where in general, even at this early hour, all was hurry and business. The antechamber was deserted, for the anxious domestics had crowded one and all to the apartment nearest to that occupied by their beloved master, in order to obtain the earliest information respecting the progress of his malady. There perhaps never existed a person who, with so little apparent effort, possessed in so great a degree the power of conciliating the affections of his depen-

dents as the Prince de Talleyrand. Of those who were with him at that moment, all had, with few exceptions, grown grey in his service; while of those who had started in their career with him in his youth, none remained: he had lived to see them all go down before him into the grave. The prince had always been accustomed to treat his chief domestics as persons worthy of confidence, and many a subject of the highest importance, which had been nursed with the greatest secrecy through the bureaux of the Foreign-office, has been discussed at full length, and with all liberty of speech, before his valet-de-chambre. It was, indeed, his custom for many years before his death to select the hour allotted to his toilet for the transaction of the most important affairs, and the discussion of the most weighty politics, and never, upon any occasion, was he known to dismiss his valet from the chamber. Perhaps some apology may be found for this apparent carelessness in the fact of his trust having never been betrayed.

The most remarkable of the whole tribe was decidedly the venerable Courtiade, one of whom, by reason of his long services and devoted attachment, the prince allowed a greater latitude than to

any other, and whose homely remarks and shrewd observations upon passing events, afforded him the greatest amusement. This man had entered the prince's service long before the breaking out of the first revolution, and died "still in those voluntary bonds," during the embassy to London. It was said that the grief which he experienced in consequence of being left in Paris, owing to his advanced age and growing infirmities, contributed, in a great measure, to hasten his death.

His attachment was rather that of a member of the canine species than of a human being. During the early years of his service he had partaken of all the vicissitudes of the ever-changing fortunes of his master. The prince would take a peculiar delight in recounting to strangers the story of his flight to America, when, in obedience to a secret friendly warning, he resolved to take his immediate departure. Courtiade was with him at the moment that he received the letter which was the cause of this decision, and the prince immediately confided to him the step he was about to take, at the same time advising him, as he had a wife and family to whom he would doubtless wish to bid adieu before venturing on so long and perilous a journey, more-

especially since the period of his return must be distant and uncertain, that he should let him depart at once, and follow in the next packet which should sail. "Non, non," replied Courtiade, in the greatest agitation; "you shall not leave the country alone and unattended—I will go with you; but only leave me till to-morrow night!" "That cannot be, Courtiade," returned the prince; "the delay will endanger our position, without being sufficiently long to be of service to yourself and your wife." "Bah! c'est bien de ma femme dont il s'agit!" exclaimed the valet, with the tears rushing to his eyes; "it is that accursed washerwoman, who has got all your fine shirts and your muslin cravats, and how, in heaven's name, will you be able to make an appearance, and in a foreign country too, without them?"

I shall never forget my first interview with the prince, nor the singular impression which this very Courtiade then produced upon me. I was admitted, as was usual with all persons who came upon affairs demanding attention and privacy, at the hour of the prince's toilet. It was a little while after the revolution of July, and just before his embassy to London. I found the renowned diplo-

matist seated tranquilly at his bureau, which mostly served him both for writing and dressing table. It was, I believe, upon the very day that the prince was to take his farewell audience of Louis Philippe, ere he set out for England, and he was to appear upon this occasion in the usual court costume. One valet was busily occupied, with a most serious countenance, in powdering, with might and main, the thick masses of his long grey hair. Another was kneeling low at his feet, endeavouring, although with difficulty, from his constrained position beneath the table, to buckle the latchets of his shoes. His secretary was seated at the bureau beside him, occupied in opening, one after the other, a huge collection of letters with astonishing rapidity, scanning the contents of each, quietly throwing some into the waste-paper basket, and placing the rest in a pile beneath for the inspection of the prince. I could not but admire the *sang froid* with which, while listening to my errand, to him personally of the highest importance, he suffered himself to be invested with the embroidered paraphernalia of his official uniform. When the attire was completed, the door of the chamber opened, and in stalked, with tottering steps, the aged, weather-beaten Cour-

tiade, laden with divers small boxes, of various forms and sizes. These were filled with the ribands and insignia of the multifarious orders with which the prince was decorated. It was curious to witness the total indifference with which he suffered himself to be ornamented, as contrasted with the eager solemnity of Courtiade, to whom the desire to fill this office with becoming dignity (for it was the only duty which in his latest years devolved upon him) had become the chief aim and object of existence.

I have been led into this involuntary digression by the remembrance of my own sensations as I traversed the now silent and deserted apartment, and was carried back in memory to that first interview, inwardly comparing the anticipations of that moment with those by which my soul was on this occasion so depressed and saddened.

When I entered the chamber where reposed the veteran statesman, he had fallen into a profound slumber, from which some amendment was augured by the physicians, although it might partly be ascribed to the fatigue induced by the over-excitement he had undergone a few hours previously in the performance of the last act of the chequered

drama of his existence—his retractation; an act which, after having been visited with praise and blame, with scorn or admiration, and each in an exaggerated degree, must for ever remain a mystery. It must have cost him much—those alone who were about him at the moment can tell how much—for he well knew that the eyes of all parties would be turned upon him, and that his motives would be discussed under various considerations, according as the opinions or the interests of each were concerned: for there were many from whom praise was to him more bitter than blame, or even ridicule, from others; and he knew well that none would view this step in its proper light, as a sacrifice small in itself—important only because it was the last, the sacrifice of every feeling, of every consideration, to the power to which he had taught every sentiment to bend for so many years, until it was said that all had been crushed by the mighty giant,—that love, revenge, even ambition, that all-absorbing passion of the master mind, had been led captive or perished in the struggle with his reason!

A report has gone abroad of his having been tormented and persecuted, even on his death-bed,

to execute this deed. This is, however, far from the truth: it had for some time occupied his thoughts, and among his papers have been found many proofs; amongst others, fragments of a correspondence with the Pope upon the subject, which must necessarily tend to confirm the assertion. But the fact is, he was influenced in this measure, as in many other instances wherein he has drawn down the blame of the sticklers for consistency, by the desire to spare pain and trouble to his family: he knew that his relatives would suffer much inconvenience by his resistance on his death-bed to the execution of certain religious formalities, to which, in his own mind, he attached not the slightest importance; and whatever may be stated by his enemies with regard to the cold and calculating policy which had guided all his actions, it cannot be denied that he had ever held in view the elevation and aggrandizement of his family. In this aim he had never been deterred, neither by dulness, nor incapacity, nor even by ingratitude; and, as we have seen, he moreover made it his care beyond the grave: his powerful and passionless soul rejected all the petty sentiments which actuate men of ordinary character: he was governed by his reason alone, and listened to nought beside.

The slumber, or rather lethargy, into which the Prince had fallen, had continued for about an hour after my arrival, and it was curious to observe, as time drew on, the uneasiness which was manifested, even, alas! by those nearest and dearest, lest this repose, however salutary, should endure beyond the hour fixed by the king for his visit. It was with some difficulty that he was aroused from this oblivion, and made to comprehend the importance of the event which was about to occur. He was scarcely lifted from his reclining position and seated on the edge of the bed, when, punctual as the hand upon the dial, his majesty, followed by Madame Adelaide, entered the apartment. It was a study both for the moralist and painter to observe the contrast between these two individuals, as, seated thus side by side, beneath the canopy of those old green curtains, they seemed grouped as for the composition of some historical picture. It was startling to turn from the broad, expansive forehead, the calm and stoic brow, and the long and shaggy locks which overshadowed it, giving to the dying statesman that lion-like expression of countenance which had so often formed the theme of admiration to poets and to artists, and then to gaze

upon the pointed crown, well-arranged *toupée*, the whole outward bearing, *tant soit peu bourgeois*, of the king, who, even at this early hour of the morning, was attired, according to his custom, with the utmost precision and primness. Despite the old faded dressing-gown of the one, and the snuff-coloured coat, stiff neckcloth, and polished boots of the other, the veriest barbarian could have told at a glance which was the "last of the nobles," and which the "First Citizen" of the empire. His majesty was the first to break silence, as in etiquette bound to do. It would be difficult to define the expression which passed across his features as he contemplated what might be called the setting of his guiding-star. Perhaps he could not himself have rendered an account of the exact impression which the scene produced upon his mind.

"I am sorry, prince, to see you suffering so much," said he, in a low, tremulous voice, rendered almost inaudible by extreme emotion.

"Sire, you have come to witness the sufferings of a dying man, and those who love him can have but one wish, that of seeing them shortly at an end."

This was uttered in that deep, strong voice so peculiar to himself, and which age had not had the

power to weaken, nor the approach of death itself been able to subdue. The effect of the speech, short as it was, was indescribable,—the pause by which it was preceded, and the tone of reproach, calm and bitter, in which it was conveyed,—produced an impression which will not be soon forgotten by those who were present.

The royal visit, like all royal visits of an unpleasant nature, was of the shortest duration possible. It was evident that his majesty felt it to be an irksome moment, and that he was at a loss what countenance to assume; and, after uttering some expressions of consolation, he rose to take his leave, but too visibly pleased that the self-imposed task was at an end. Here the prince once more, with his usual tact, came to his relief, by slightly rising and introducing to his notice those by whom he was surrounded,—his physician, his secretary, his principal valet, and his own private doctor; and then a reminiscence of the old courtier seemed to come across him, for with his parting salutation he could not forbear a compliment,—"Sire, our house has received this day an honour worthy to be inscribed in our annals, and one which my successors will remember with pride and gratitude."

I must confess that I was grievously disappointed in the anticipations which I had formed of this visit. I had looked upon it as the farewell of the safely-landed voyager (landed, too, amid storm and tempest) to the wise and careful pilot who had steered him skilfully through rock and breaker, and now pushed off, alone, amid the darkness, to be seen no more. But no: there was the hurry and impatience of one to whom the scene was painful; and that it was painful who can doubt? There was, too, that evident secret self-applause, in the performance of an irksome duty; but not the slightest expression of any one sentiment of friendship or attachment, such as I had imagined to have bound these two men together. A friend of mine—a man of great sense and discernment—to whom I made this observation, remarked, drily, "It is plain that his majesty has no fear to see him die; but wait a little while, and we shall see that he will have regret enough that he should be dead!"

As a kind of relief to the gloomy side of the picture, might be observed the anxious feminine flurry displayed throughout the interview by Madame, who appeared to suffer much uneasiness lest the coldness of her royal brother should be noticed, and

who endeavoured, by a kindly display of interest and busy politeness, to make amends for what might appear wanting elsewhere.

I should not perhaps have deemed it necessary to record thus minutely the particular details of this scéne, had not it already been so much dwelt upon in another light. Astonishment and admiration, frivolous and exaggerated, have been expressed with regard to this remarkable act of condescension on the part of Louis Philippe, as though royalty were alone exempt from the debt of manly and honourable gratitude. Why, there is not one of the sovereigns beneath whom Talleyrand had lived, who would not have hurried to show respect to the death-bed of this truly great statesman; and yet all had not been raised to the throne by his means! Napoleon, the stern—the iron-hearted—even he would not have hesitated, because he scorned not to avow that he had owed as much of his political success to the timely counsels of his minister for foreign affairs as to his own skill and foresight. Louis Dixhuit—neither would he have deemed such a step beneath his dignity: he, too, needed no reminding that he was deeply indebted to the Prince de Talleyrand, not perhaps for zeal and activity,

but for what, according to time and circumstance, was to him of far more value—his wise, discreet, and generous forbearance: while Charles X. would have come, with pious resignation, to mourn the quenching of this last beacon of the old French aristocracy, and would have rejoiced that by his means it should have been extinguished amid becoming dignity and honour.

It was shortly after the departure of the king that the first symptoms of dissolution were observed by the physicians. The whole family, every member of which had been apprised of this, immediately gathered around the prince. The Duke de P—— was there among the number, and I could not forbear a smile as I remembered the satirical observation made by the prince himself, a short time before his illness, upon the occasion of rather a ceremonious visit from this personage,—"Just leaves me in disappointment," said he, as he departed; "one would think, by his melancholy visage and his lugubrious costume, that he was deputed hither by some *entrepreneur des pompes funèbres.*"

Towards the middle of the day, the prince began to grow more restless and feverish. I could not resist the temptation of seeking relief from the

stifled air of that close chamber, and passed through to the drawing-room. I was verily astounded at the scene which there met my eyes. Never shall I forget the impression produced by the transition from that silent room—that bed of suffering—to the crowded apartment where "troops of friends"—all the *élite* of the society of Paris—were assembled. There was a knot of busy politicians, with ribbons at their button-holes—some with powdered heads, some with bald heads—gathered around the blazing fire; their animated conversation, although, by the good taste and feeling of him who directed it, conducted in a low tone, filling the apartment with its unceasing murmur. I observed, too, some of the diplomatist's oldest friends, who had come hither from real and sincere attachment, and who took no part in the eager debates of these political champions.

Among others the Count de M——, he whom I had never seen but as the prime wit of all joyous réunions—whose pungent joke and biting sarcasm have become the terror of bores and twaddlers, for they cling for ever, like burrs, to those against whom they are hurled:—the only man, in short, with whom the prince himself dared not, upon all

occasions, to measure himself in the keen skirmish of intellect, now sat silent and sorrowful, apart from the rest, apparently lost in thought, nor heeding the various details of the scene which was enacting around him, and which, had it been elsewhere, would not have failed to call forth some of the sharp and bitter traits of satire for which he is so much dreaded. In one corner was seated a *coterie* of ladies discussing topics entirely foreign to the time and place. Sometimes a low burst of light laughter would issue from among them, in spite of the reprimanding "Chut" which upon such occasions arose from the further end of the room. On a sofa near the window lay extended, at full length, the youthful and lovely Duchess de V——, with a bevy of young beaux—all robber-like and "jeune France," kneeling on the carpet beside her, or sitting low at her feet on the cushions of the divan.

The scene was altogether one of other times. It seemed as though the lapse of centuries might be forgotten, and that we were carried back at a bound to the days of Louis Quatorze, and to the death-bed of Mazarin. There was the same *insouciance*, the same weariness of expectation.

Some were gathered there from *convénance,* some from courtesy to the rest of the family; many from curiosity, and some few from real friendship; while none seemed to remember that a mighty spirit was passing from the world, or that they were there assembled to behold a great man die. Presently, however, the conversation ceased—the hum of voices was at an end—there was a solemn pause, and every eye was turned towards the slowly-opening door of the prince's chamber. A domestic entered with downcast looks and swollen eyes, and advancing towards Dr. C——, who, like myself, had just then sought an instant's relief in the drawing-room, whispered a few words in his ear. He arose instantly and entered the chamber. The natural precipitation with which this movement was executed but too plainly revealed its cause. It was followed by the whole assembly. In an instant every one was on the alert, and there was a simultaneous rush to the door of the apartment. M. de Talleyrand was at that moment seated on the side of the bed, supported in the arms of his secretary. It was evident that Death had set his seal upon that marble brow, yet was I struck with the still-existing vigour of the coun-

tenance. It seemed as if all the life which had once sufficed to furnish forth the whole being were now centred in the brain. From time to time he raised his head, with a sudden movement shaking back the long, grey locks which impeded his sight, and gazed around; and then, satisfied with the result of his examination of that crowded room, a triumphant smile would pass across his features, and his head would again fall upon his bosom.

From the circumstances in which I have been placed, it has fallen to my lot to be witness of more than one death-scene, but never in any case did the sentiments displayed at that awful hour appear so utterly consistent with the character borne by any individual during life, as in the case of the Prince de Talleyrand. He saw death approach neither with shrinking nor with fear, nor yet with any affectation of scorn or of defiance, but rather with cool and steady courage, as a well-matched, honourable foe with whom he had wrestled long and bravely, and to whom, now that he was fairly vanquished, he deemed it no shame to yield, nor blushed to lay down his arms and surrender. If there be truth in the assertion that it is a satis-

faction to die amid the tears and lamentations of multitudes of friends and hosts of relatives, then indeed must his last feeling towards the world he was for ever quitting have been one of entire approbation and content, for he expired amid regal pomp and reverence; and of all those whom he, perhaps, would himself have called together, none were wanting. The aged friend of his maturity, the fair young idol of his age, were gathered on bended knee beside his bed, and if the words of comfort whispered from the book by the murmuring priest failed to reach his ear, it was because their sound was stifled by the louder wailings of those whom in life he had loved so well.

Scarcely, however, were those eyes, whose every glance had been watched so long and with such deep interest, for ever closed, when a sudden change came over the scene. One would have thought that a flight of crows had suddenly taken wing, so great was the precipitation with which each one hurried from the hotel, in the hope of being first to spread the news among the particular set or coterie of which he or she happened to be the oracle. Ere nightfall, that chamber, which all the day had been crowded to excess, was aban-

doned to the servants of the tomb; and when I entered in the evening, I found the very arm-chair, from whence I had so often heard the prince launch the courtly jest or stinging epigram, now occupied by a hired priest, whispering prayers for the repose of his departed soul.

It was after the death of the prince that the awe and devotion with which he had inspired his household became evident. Not one of the domestics left his station upon any pretext whatever. The attendants waited, each in his turn, and at the same stated hour, to which he had been accustomed during his life. I myself saw the cook, punctual to the hour in the morning at which he had for so many years been summoned to receive his orders, now followed by his bevy of *marmitons*, with their snow-white costumes and long carving-knives, walk with solemn step to the foot of the bed, and, kneeling down with cotton cap in hand, breathe a short prayer: each sprinkled the corpse with holy water, and then the whole procession withdrew in the same silence with which they had entered. I was deeply struck with the mixture of the sublime and the ludicrous in this scene. It reminded me of many of the whimsical creations to be met with in some of the old German legends.

Contrary to the usual French custom, which ordains that interment shall ensue eight-and-forty hours after decease, the public funeral, upon the occasion of the depositing of the body in the church of the Assumption, did not take place until the following week, owing to the embalmment, which was a work of time; while the transferring of the corpse to its final resting-place at Valençay could not be accomplished until the month of September, the vault, which was preparing even before the Prince's death, being yet unfinished.

Independently of the interest which I felt in the ceremony, as well as the desire to render this last homage to one who had, upon every occasion of my intercourse with him, been all kindness and urbanity to me, I determined to repair to Valençay and witness the funerals—for at one fell stroke had death swept from the earth all that remained of that one generation. The Prince de Talleyrand—the wise, the witty, the clever, and the cunning—was to go down to the grave with the guileless and the simple-hearted Duke, his brother! Upon the same occasion, too, the small tomb of the infant Yolande, wherein she had peacefully slumbered for a space of two years, was routed,

and the tiny coffin was to accompany that of the Prince on its long and dreary journey. The hearse which was to convey the bodies was the same which had been constructed expressly for the removal of the corpse of the ex-Queen of Holland from Switzerland, in appearance something resembling an ammunition-waggon, with covered seats in front, wherein were stationed two of the personal attendants of the Prince. The body was raised from the vaults of the Assumption at midnight, and the little snow-white coffin was placed upon the elaborately-wrought oaken chest which had contained it.

I was told by a friend, who witnessed the scene, that nothing could exceed the dramatic effect of the departure of the corse-laden vehicle from Paris. The disinterment of the child from the lonely cemetery of Mont Parnasse—the lading of the ponderous coffin by the light of torches—the peculiar rattle of the hearse through the silent streets at that solemn hour, and beneath that calm moon, which makes "all that is dark seem darker still." One incident is worth recording. On starting from the iron gates of the chapel, one of the postillions turned and shouted the usual ques-

tion, "*Vers quelle barrière?*" and was answered by a voice proceeding from the hearse itself, "*Barrière d'Enfer.*"

We arrived at Valençay on the third day after our departure from Paris, and it was at about ten o'clock on the same night that the worn and dust-covered hearse was descried wending its way up the long avenue of chestnut trees leading to the château. Every honour which had been paid to the lord of the mansion during his life was now rendered, with scrupulous exactness, to his lifeless corpse. No ceremony, however trifling, was omitted. The wide gates were thrown open to admit the sombre vehicle, which entered the court of honour with the same ceremony that had denoted the approach of the stately carriage which had been wont to drive at a somewhat ruder pace through the regal portal. The whole of the numerous household, with the heir of the domain in advance of the rest, were assembled on the perron. The Prince's nephew himself took his seat in front of the hearse, to conduct it down into the town; the goodly array of servants and huntsmen and foresters all following on foot, and bearing torches, to the church, wherein the body was deposited for

the night, previous to the final ceremony, which was to take place on the morrow.

Early in the morning all was astir in the little burgh. Never before had a sight so fraught with interest been witnessed by its inhabitants. It seemed like a gala day through every street. Not a window but was crowded with spectators, while the footway was choked with peasants from all the neighbouring districts, in their gayest attire. The National Guard of the town was all afoot from the earliest hour in the morning; and altogether so cheerful was the whole aspect of the place, that the traveller who had passed through on that day would have imagined it to have been the anniversary of some great public rejoicing. The corpse of the Duke had arrived in far different plight. No pomp, no pageantry, was here—a solitary post-carriage, with a single pair of horses—no train of mourners. The physician who had attended his last illness alone accompanied the body from St. Germain.

There was food for reflection in the contrast! No needless expense had been wasted upon idle ornament and funeral trappings, for, when the coffin was uncovered, an exclamation of surprise

burst from those around. It was of plain elm, such as those used by people of middling degree, and, when placed beside those of his more favoured relatives, formed a melancholy contrast. But now one pall conceals the whole, the rich velvet, and the plain, unvarnished planks. One long stream of melody ascends to Heaven, one prayer for the repose of those who sleep beneath that gorgeous catafalque—for him who died full of wealth and honour, whose vast and powerful intellect had held dominion over men's minds even to the very last — and for him who closed his eyes in solitude and neglect, and whose intellect had wavered even on the very verge of madness. Both were transported to the chapel of the sisters of St. André, founded by the Prince himself, and wherein he had already placed the family vault. His body was the first to descend, amid the firing of muskets, and the noisy demonstrations of respect of those without: then that of the Duke, amid silence unbroken, save by the harsh creaking of the coffin, as it slid down the iron grating: then, last and least, although the oldest denizen of the tomb, the little Yolande, the fairy coffin seeming, with its silver chasings and embossed

velvet, of snowy whiteness, rather a casket destined to ornament the boudoir of a youthful beauty, than to become a receptacle of corruption and decay.

The vault was closed, and all was over. Each one had contributed the last token of Catholic respect, and we all turned from the chapel to take the road to the château, where entertainment for those who attended the funeral had been liberally prepared by its new master. It was then that we began to look around, and to feel some curiosity to know who had shared with us in rendering this last homage to one who was entitled to the gratitude of every individual of his nation. We gazed right and left, but few were there, and these were *all* those who had *served him* devotedly and faithfully—the grateful domestic, the obscure and humble friend; but of the great ones of the earth whom *he had served*—of those whom *he* had raised to greatness and to honour—there was not ONE!

EXTRACTS

FROM THE

MANUSCRIPTS, SPEECHES,

AND

POLITICAL WRITINGS

OF

PRINCE TALLEYRAND.

PRINCE TALLEYRAND'S

MAXIMS FOR SEASONING CONVERSATION.

Our welcome of a stranger depends upon the name be bears,—upon the coat he wears: our farewell upon the spirit he has displayed in the interview.

There is so great a charm in friendship, that there is even a kind of pleasure in acknowledging oneself duped by the sentiment it inspires.

Unbounded modesty is nothing more than unavowed vanity: the too humble obeisance is sometimes a disguised impertinence.

The reputation of a man is like his shadow—gigantic when it precedes him, and pigmy in its proportions when it follows.

The "point of honour" can often be made to produce, by means of vanity, as many good deeds as virtue.

More evil truths are discovered by the corruption of the heart than by the penetration of the mind.

Beauty, devoid of grace, is a mere hook without the bait.

Schismatic wranglers are like a child's top, noisy and agitated when whipped, quiet and motionless when left alone.

He who cannot feel friendship is alike incapable of love. Let a woman beware of the man who owns that he loves no one but herself.

The rich man despises those who flatter him too much, and hates those who do not flatter him at all.

The spirit and enterprise of a courtier are all expended in the search after place and preferment; nothing remains for the fulfilment of the duties to which success compels him.

The Count de Coigny possesses wit and talent, but his conversation is fatiguing, because his me-

mory is equally exact in quoting the date of the death of Alexander the Great and that of the Princess de Guéménée's poodle.

My passion for Madame de Talleyrand was soon extinguished, because she was merely possessed of beauty. The influence of personal charms is limited: curiosity forms the great ingredient of this kind of love; but add the fascination of intellect to those attractions which habit and possession diminish each day, you will find them multiplied tenfold; and if, besides intellect and beauty, you discover in your mistress caprice, singularity, and inequality of temper, close your eyes and seek no further—you are in love for life.

The imagination of men is often the refuge of their prejudices.

To contradict and argue with a total stranger, is like knocking at a gate to ascertain if there is any one within.

That sovereign has a little mind who seeks to go down to posterity by means of great public buildings. It is to confide to masons and bricklayers the task of writing History.

Love is a reality which is born in the fairy region of romance.

The love of glory can only create a hero; the contempt of it creates a great man.

The mind of the Duc de Laval is like a dark lanthorn, only capable of lighting his own path.

The errors of great men, and the good deeds of reprobates, should not be reckoned in our estimates of their respective characters.

A court is an assemblage of noble and distinguished beggars.

Theologians resemble dogs, that gnaw large bones for the sake of a very little meat.

The stream of vice will flow as naturally into palaces, as the common sewer flows into the river, and the river flows onward to the sea.

It is sometimes quite enough for a man to feign ignorance of that which he knows, to gain the reputation of knowing that of which he is ignorant.

A long continuance of wise administration is the best and surest means of arriving at despotism. Our present government gives us no alarm.

Both erudition and agriculture ought to be encouraged by government; wit and manufactures will come of themselves.

The endeavour to convince a *bel esprit* by the force of reason, is as mad an undertaking as the attempt to silence an echo by raising the voice.

Metaphysics always remind me of the caravanserais in the desert. They stand solitary and unsupported, and are therefore always ready to crumble into ruin.

A man should make his *début* in the world as though he were about to enter a hostile country; he must send out scouts, establish sentinels, and ever be upon the watch himself.

Too much sensibility creates unhappiness; too much insensibility creates crime.

What I have been taught, I have forgotten; what I know, I have guessed.

An elderly coxcomb may be compared to a butterfly deprived of wings—he becomes a caterpillar once more.

Certain acts may be rendered legal; but can never be made legitimate.

Human life is like a game at chess; each piece holds its place upon the chess-board—king, queen, bishop, and pawn. Death comes, the game is up, and all are thrown, without distinction, pell-mell into the same bag.

The bold defiance of a woman is the certain sign of her shame—when she has once ceased to blush, it is because she has too much to blush for.

Life, to a young man, is like a new acquaintance, of whom he grows disgusted as he advances in years.

When certain absurd opinions become too generally adopted, they must be replaced by less noxious errors—that is the best way of arriving at Truth.

It is an attribute of true philosophy, never to force the progress of Truth and Reason, but to wait till the dawn of Light; meanwhile, the philosopher may wander into hidden paths, but he will never depart far from the main track.

Prudence in a woman should be an instinct, not a virtue.

Churchmen and men of letters have peculiar difficulties in the world,—the first are continually divided between scandal and hypocrisy, the second between pride and baseness.

The thought of death throws upon life a lurid glow, resembling that of a conflagration, lighting up that which it is about to devour.

In love we grow acquainted, because we are already attached—in friendship we must know each other before we love.

A great capitalist is like a vast lake, upon whose bosom ships can navigate, but which is useless to the country, because no stream issues thence to fertilize the land.

With a great seigneur, there is more to be gained by flattering his vices than by improving his estates.

Truth and virtue can do less good in the world than their false, well-acted semblance can do evil.

A generous man will place the benefits he confers beneath his feet,—those he receives, nearest his heart.

A narrow-minded man can never possess real and true generosity—he can never go beyond mere benevolence.

General maxims applied to every-day life are like routine applied to the arts, good only for mediocre intellects.

If you wish to appear agreeable in society, you must consent to be taught many things which you know already.

We must learn to submit with grace to commit the follies which depend upon character.

There are many vices which do not deprive us of friends,—there are many virtues which prevent our having any.

In reading over the memoirs of the reign of Louis Quatorze, we find many things in the worst manners of that day, which are wanting in the very best society of our own.

I remember having, in my youth, been amused at the resolution of one of my friends to give up the society of the demoiselles de l'opéra, to which he was much addicted, in consequence of his having made the discovery that there existed among

these girls as much falsehood and hypocrisy as amongst honest women.

Certain women can find buyers for their charms, who would find no one to take them were they to be had for nothing.

I remember having often been told in my youth that the love of glory was a virtue. Strange must be that virtue which requires the aid of every vice.

There are two things to which we never grow accustomed,—the ravages of time, and the injustice of our fellow men.

The written memoirs which a man leaves after him *pour servir à l'histoire de sa vie*, and above all, *pour servir à l'histoire* of his vanity, always remind me of the story of that saint, who left by will a hundred thousand crowns to the Church, to pay for his canonization.

To succeed in the world, it is much more necessary to possess the penetration to discover who is a fool than to discover who is a clever man.

PRINCE TALLEYRAND'S OPINION OF FOX.

(A Fragment from the Prince's Memoirs.)

January 15th, 1807.

I HAVE just heard of the death of Mr. Fox. It is now fifteen years since I was introduced to him by Mr. Ogilvie, the husband of his aunt, the Duchess of Leinster. It was at his own house, in South-street, and, I think, in June, 1791.

Shortly before his death, false reports led him to form an unjust opinion of me; yet my regret for his loss is not the less deep and sincere, and I feel a firm conviction that, had his life been spared, he would have rendered me justice.

Mr. Fox united in his own character the apparently incompatible qualities of the mildest of men, and the most vehement of orators. In private life he was gentle, modest, kind-hearted, and remarkably simple in his manners. His dislike of ostentation, and of any approach to dogmatism, sometimes gave to his conversation an air of listlessness; his superiority was manifested only by the information he diffused around him, and by the generous feel-

ing which always prompted him to direct the greatest share of his attention to the most obscure members of the company in which he happened to be. The simplicity of his manners did not, in the least, detract from that urbanity, and perfect politeness, which resulted more from the gentleness of his nature, than from his familiar intercourse with the most polished society of Europe. His conversation, when not restrained by the languor arising from fatigue, or by his delicacy towards others, was truly charming. It may, perhaps, be said, that never was the pleasantry of a man of wit so perfectly natural, as that of Mr. Fox; it seemed more like the outpouring, than the creation, of his fancy. He had lived on terms of close intimacy with all those of his contemporaries most distinguished for talent, learning, and political eminence. For the space of thirty years, he maintained intercourse with almost every man in Europe whose conversation and correspondence were of a nature to fortify, enrich, or polish the intellectual faculties. His own literary attainments were varied and profound. In classical erudition, which in England is specially understood by the term learning, he was not inferior to some of the most distinguished

scholars of his day. Like all men of genius, he was passionately fond of poetry; the study and cultivation of that branch of literature, formed his favourite source of recreation, amidst the fatigues and annoyances of public life. His own poetic effusions were easy and agreeable, and deserving of a high place in that class of writing which the French call *vers de société*. The character of his mind was manifested in his predilection for the poetry of the two most poetic nations (or at least most poetic languages) of eastern Europe, viz., the ancient Greek and the modern Italian. Fox did not like political discussions in conversation, and he never voluntarily took part in them.

Any attempt to render justice to his oratorical talents would carry me far beyond the limits of these brief remarks. He was always, and everywhere, natural; and, in public, his manner and appearance were stamped with much of the simplicity which characterized him in private life. When he began to speak, an ordinary observer would have supposed him to be labouring under embarrassment, and even a discriminating listener would only have been struck by the just accuracy of his ideas, and the lucid simplicity of his lan-

guage; but, after speaking for some time, he was transformed into another being. He forgot himself, and everything around him. His thoughts were wholly absorbed in his subject. His genius warmed as he advanced, and his sentences flashed like rays of light; until at length, in an impetuous and irresistible torrent of eloquence, he carried along with him the feelings and the conviction of his hearers. Fox certainly possessed, beyond any public speaker of modern times, that union of reasoning power, of simplicity, and of vehemence, which characterizes the prince of orators. Next to Demosthenes, he was the most Demosthenian of public speakers. "I knew him," observes Mr. Burke, in a pamphlet written after their unfortunate difference, "when he was only nineteen years old. From that time he continued rising, by slow degrees, until he has now become the most brilliant and accomplished debater that ever lived."

The tranquil dignity of mind, (never disturbed but by great causes)—the total absence of vanity—the contempt of ostentation—the hatred of intrigue—the candour, the honesty, and the perfect *bonhomie*, which were the distinguishing qualities of Fox, would seem to render him the faithful repre-

sentative of the old national English character—a character which it would be presumptuous to hope can be succeeded by anything better, were it ever to change. The amiability of his disposition inspired confidence—the ardour of his eloquence excited enthusiasm—and the urbanity of his manners invited friendship. Mr. Gibbon has truly observed, that in Fox the highest intellectual powers of man were blended with the engaging gentleness and simplicity of childhood. No human being, he adds, was ever more free from every trace of malignity, vanity, or falsehood. The combination of so many admirable qualities of public and private character, sufficiently accounts for the fact that no English statesman, during so long a period of adverse fortune, retained so many attached friends and zealous adherents, as Charles Fox. The union of great ardour, in the sentiments of the public man, with extreme gentleness in the manners of the social being, would appear to have been an hereditary qualification in Fox, whose father is said to have possessed the same power of winning the attachment of all who knew him. Those who are acquainted with another generation of his descendants, must feel

that this engaging quality is not extinct in the family.

Nothing, perhaps, can more forcibly portray the impression produced by this peculiarity in the character of Fox, than a remark made by Burke. In 1797, six years after all intimacy between Burke and Fox had ceased, the former, speaking to an individual honoured by the friendship of the latter, said, "Certainly, Fox is a man formed to be loved;" and these words were uttered with a warmth and emphasis, which precluded all doubt of their cordial sincerity.

The few lines I have here hastily traced, have been written under feelings too sorrowful and serious to admit of any intention to exaggerate; and the affection which I cherished for Mr. Fox will not suffer me to profane his memory by any allusion to the factious contentions of the day. The political conduct of Fox belongs to history. The measures he supported, and those he opposed, may divide the opinions of posterity, as they have those of the present age; but Charles Fox will, assuredly, command the unanimous respect of future generations, by his pure sentiments as a statesman—by his zeal for the civil and religious rights of all

mankind—by his advocacy of liberal government, the free exercise of human faculties, and the progressive civilization of the human race—by the ardent love he cherished for his country, whose welfare and happiness can never be disconnected from his glory—and by his profound veneration for that free constitution, which, it will be acknowledged, he understood better than any politician of his time, both in its legal and in its philosophical character.

PRIVATE LETTER FROM PRINCE TALLEYRAND TO MARSHAL SEBASTIANI, ON THE POLICY OF SUFFERING BELGIUM TO BE CREATED AN INDEPENDENT MONARCHY.

London, January 3rd, 1831.

My dear General,—I have read over several times, with the utmost attention, your letter of the 30th ult., and I wish to explain to you confidentially my views relative to its contents. It is evident that, at the present time, France is divided between

two parties, whose opinions have their echoes in the council of the king. One of these parties urges us to war, and employs every means, direct and indirect, to bring about that end. The views of this party are directed solely to the attainment of power, and therefore it is necessary to be on one's guard against the suggestions and speeches which they put forth. The other party, which is so ably headed by yourself, maintains that peace alone can consolidate the new state of things in France, and, consequently, it may be presumed that all its efforts tend to the preservation of peace. It has been truly observed, that a kingdom may rise up amidst the turmoil of war, but that it can only be firmly established in time of peace.

The new line of policy which you suggest in reference to the affairs of Belgium is at variance with all my ideas on the subject, and it would, I am sure, be equally opposed to the views of the English ministers and the members of the conference. Of this fact I have had opportunities of convincing myself in the course of several conversations I have casually entered into for the purpose of sounding opinions on the subject.

We might succeed, but not without difficulty, in

obtaining the sovereignty of Belgium for Prince Leopold, on his marriage with a French princess; and I cannot comprehend how the speeches of certain members of the party decidedly favourable to war, should have determined you to renounce the only arrangement by which peace can now be secured.

It must be evident to you, as it is to me, that Prince Leopold is very far from being what is called English. He is attached to England only by the 50,000*l.* per annum, of which he cannot be deprived, and which gives him the advantage of presenting a civil list, ready settled, to the country he may be called to rule.

Like all great political events, the Belgian revolution appears to me to pass through different phases. The establishment of a monarchical government in Belgium seems a step calculated to relieve that country from the embarrassments in which she is enthralled—viz., the division of the debt between Belgium and Holland; the debt contracted by Belgium to Russia; together with many other matters connected with Belgian independence.

When all these questions shall be adjusted, and

Europe shall have approved the adjustment, we may, after the lapse of a few years, entertain with some hope of success, the project of uniting Belgium to France. The very adjustment of the points above referred to, would favour the chance of success, because it would remove difficulties which every one is capable of appreciating. But I am convinced that war would be the inevitable consequence of the proposition now made for annexing Belgium to France.

The present spirit of the members of the conference, and of the English Cabinet, is extremely favourable to us; but, my dear General, I affirm, in the full confidence of being correct, that if we were suspected of entertaining other intentions than those which I have deemed it expedient to express, our position with reference to all the Courts of Europe, including that of England, would be changed much to our disadvantage.

I entreat you, therefore, to reflect maturely before you enter upon so perilous a course. War may compromise so many questions, that it appears to me of all things most to be feared and avoided. The wisdom of the king, who well knows how to resist party clamour, and your prudence, my dear

General, must avert this misfortune, and control the turbulent spirits who would drive us to extremities, unmindful that the glory of France now depends on peace. It is easy to commence war,—the difficulty is how to maintain and to terminate it. In short, I am averse to the project of the acquisition of Belgium. The aggrandizement of France by that acquisition would doubtless be flattering to French vanity, but it would in many respects be injurious to French industry. The case is different with respect to the Rhine and Saxony. But, General, your position enables you to judge more accurately than I can, the various questions adverted to in this letter.

FROM PRINCE TALLEYRAND TO MARSHAL SEBASTIANI, ON THE SAME SUBJECT AS THE PRECEDING.

THE importance of the crisis at which we have arrived cannot fail frequently to claim your attention. At the present juncture we may, by prompt

and honest decision, preserve peace, or by prolonged hesitation we may enable intriguers (too numerous a class both here and in Belgium) to compromise the destinies of Europe, and of the dynasty which the voice of the nation has raised to the throne of France. I await with the utmost anxiety and impatience the reply of the French Cabinet to the various questions proposed by the four Powers; the delay of that reply probably causes indecision in the opinions of the plenipotentiaries assembled here. For Heaven's sake let not the Belgians, who are so stupid as not to perceive all that has been done for them, and the Dutch, who are stimulated by bitter hatred, draw us into this deplorable contest! Let us not suffer an affair, trivial in itself, to disturb the equilibrium of the world, and to unbridle the fiercest passions. All will be ended, all consummated on the day when France, conjointly with the four other Powers, shall declare that Belgium is to retain her *old boundaries, her independence, and her neutrality.* On that day the Dutch will be paralysed, the Germanic Confederation will halt, the Belgians will be subdued, the conference will choose Prince Leopold for king, and peace will be secured. If France be

so blind as to censure your administration for having saved her in spite of herself—if she be unjust to those who have preserved her—then, sir, you will cease to be minister, and I shall cease to be ambassador. We shall forfeit our posts for having defended and maintained a great principle, for which future ages will honour us. In short, we may be sacrificed, but let it be in the cause of peace, in the cause of civilization and of good order, and in defence of a sovereign whom we love, and whose throne will fall in the general destruction now impending. There is but little time for averting the terrible disaster which my old experience foresees, and of which your quick and accurate discernment must have enabled you to warn the council. But, sir, let your decisions be formed singly with yourself. The powers of the clearest head, and soundest judgment, cannot be freely exercised except when withdrawn from the turbulence of one party, the timidity of another, and unbiassed by the ignorance of outward affairs which is so marked a trait in the French character. The intelligence of the French people, shrewd as it is, scarcely ever extends beyond the frontiers of their own country, and therefore they labour

under the singular mistake of supposing that England cannot go to war with us. They do not perceive that the vast concession made by the recent Reform Bill has conferred on the English ministry a temporary popularity, of which they will freely avail themselves to obtain the means of opposing us; and that this means will be much more readily accorded to the present administration than it would have been to that of the Duke of Wellington. Our July revolution is tarnished by circumstances which have greatly obscured its lustre; and it has been justly observed that anarchy and disorder are not very formidable ramparts to be opposed to an enemy. However, there appears to be no disposition to attack us, more especially since the questions of right and law have been entrusted to you. But whenever we give reason to warrant suspicions of our good faith, or of our capability to repress turbulent movements, then, rest assured, that England will, though reluctantly, oppose us with an immensity and a facility of power at which France will be astounded.

On the other hand all that is required of us is to be firm at home and moderate abroad. There is no intention to take anything from us; on the con-

trary, many concessions on the part of neighbouring powers have been assented to. But it is wished to preserve general peace and security, and not to grant to nations, whose independence has been recognised in spite of old treaties, the right of conquest over countries which have never belonged to them, and which are the guaranteed property of others. For our own sake, sir, as well as for the general good, it were to be wished that every individual composing the French cabinet could comprehend the principle of *non-intervention* in the way in which it was understood by M. de Rigny at Navarino.

LETTER FROM PRINCE TALLEYRAND TO COUNT SEBASTIANI, ON THE AFFAIRS OF BELGIUM.

London, January 25th, 1831.

MONSIEUR LE COMTE,—Count Flahaut arrived here the day before yesterday, and delivered to me the letter which you entrusted to his charge. I thank you for having chosen him as the bearer of it.

The raising of the siege of Antwerp, and the irri-

tation of the King of Holland, prove that the conference was sufficiently rigorous towards both parties to obtain the wished-for result.

My conversation with M. de Flahaut has furnished me with some valuable information respecting the ideas and intentions of the king's government relative to the affairs which I am directed to manage here, and also respecting the state of public opinion in France. I, however, regret that Count Flahaut had left France before my despatch of the 21st reached you. The intelligence it contained of the resolution adopted by the conference must necessarily influence the views of the king and his council, as well as the line of policy to be pursued towards Belgium. I congratulate myself on the declaration of neutrality, which has been received with great satisfaction by the statesmen of this country. All, to whatsoever party they belong, regard it as a measure of wise policy, honourable to modern civilization, and calculated to ensure the maintenance of peace by the facility it affords for conciliating, if not all claims, at least all essential interests. I must add, however, that whilst acceding to the measure, they regard it as wholly tending to the advantage of France.

I am aware that, in the juncture at which affairs have arrived in Belgium, and amidst the embarrassment which this state of things entails on France and Europe, the public mind has been agitated by schemes of the most opposite character. The avowed neutrality has now rendered most of these plans utterly impracticable, and has enabled me to revive, with advantage, the question of the Prince of Naples, to which, at first, so much opposition was manifested. I even think that we shall completely succeed in rendering the city of Antwerp a free port, or rather in making it one of the Hanse Towns; and I am not quite certain but that we may arrive at this result without Antwerp ceasing to belong, as a free port, to Belgium. From the day on which the protocol was signed, such is the line of policy I have pursued, and I shall continue to follow it up, unless I receive contrary instructions from you.

This plan has the advantage of showing how utterly useless would be any concession made to England on the continent. I will even acknowledge that it was with the view of banishing any idea of that nature that I adopted the system I am now pursuing. I should have deeply regretted to

see the king's name and yours attached to a clause which, in my opinion, would render our government liable to the charge of being indifferent to the judgment of posterity.

History bears evidence to the difficulties entailed by the prolonged occupation of Calais by the English, and it records the favours lavished on the Guises, when they relieved France from that disgrace. These lessons ought not to be thrown away upon us. The same mistakes may be followed by the same results, and may obliterate the stamp of independence which is attached to all the acts of the king's government. I am certain that his majesty is too high-minded to dwell long on the idea of a plan which, without having any direct effect on our own country, would cause us to be reproached for the manner in which we have exercised our continental power.

No one will go so far as to deny that the annexation of Belgium to France would be an advantage, though an aggrandizement of territory on the bank of the Rhine would be more in accordance with my notions of French policy. I admit that the annexation of Belgium would render popular, for a time, the government that might bring it about,

notwithstanding its injurious effects on French industry. But you may rely on it, Count, that that popularity would be exceedingly transient, if purchased at the price that is proposed to be paid for it. There is no reputation, however solid, that would not be shaken by a measure of such a nature. Does not every one blame the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, for having brought the Russians into Europe? What a heavy judgment would fall on those who should bring the English back on the continent! It is best not to throw ourselves into contact with those whom we cannot reach on their own ground.

I am convinced, Monsieur le Comte, if you were plenipotentiary here, you would never affix your name to an act which not even the most protracted and most disastrous war would justify.

NOTE OF M. COLMACHE. — The Minister for Foreign Affairs (Count Sebastiani) made no reply to the above severe, but just comments on the unworthy proposition which Count Flahaut had undertaken to communicate to the French embassy.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE TRIAL OF PEERS BY THE CHAMBER OF PEERS, AND THE REASONS ON WHICH TALLEYRAND GROUNDED HIS VOTE IN THE AFFAIR OF LIEUTENANTS-GENERAL GUILLEMINOT AND BORDESOULLE.

Our political laws have existed only during the space of a few years. We have witnessed their creation and their birth. As yet they are scarcely anything more than theories. Time alone will convert them into practical laws. In other words, we possess laws, but we do not yet possess jurisprudence.

Amidst all the uncertainties necessarily arising out of such a state of things, it has appeared to me that my duty, as a Peer of France, was to seek, in reflection, for that light and knowledge which experience cannot afford. The following chain of ideas has aided me in the accomplishment of this duty.

The first question I put to myself was, What is the Court of Peers? The answer is, An extra-

ordinary tribunal, instituted by the Charter, for judging certain affairs which that Charter has withdrawn from the ordinary tribunals, either on account of the serious nature of the crimes, or by reason of the rank of the individuals accused. Such, it appears to me, are the meaning and the spirit of Articles 33 and 34 of our fundamental law.

Is this a wise institution? Is it beneficial to the country? I would answer in the affirmative. But these points are not for me to determine. The Charter has decreed, and that is sufficient.

Now, in what does this extraordinary tribunal resemble the ordinary tribunals? Can it be tied down to the same forms of procedure? I find that the law—the faithful guardian of the interests of society, whilst it declares that crime must not escape punishment, is, nevertheless, more watchful in protecting the innocent than in punishing the guilty. It has therefore wisely established hierarchical degrees in the judiciary organization. It separates the accusation from the judgment, and even after judgment the condemned is empowered to appeal for its annulment, if, in the long course of proceedings, a single one of the prescribed tutelary forms shall have been violated or disavowed.

But in the Court of Peers there are no hierarchic degrees; there is not, and cannot be, a chamber of accusation distinct from the court of judgment, where the accusers are themselves the judges. When the Court of Peers has pronounced, the condemned party has no appeal, either on the score of form or fact. The mercy of the king alone can save him. The justice of the Court of Peers is one and indivisible; its action is prompt and irreformable, and against its decisions there is no appeal. It must not be supposed that public feeling rises in alarm against a tribunal which, by its inflexible rapidity, promptly terminates the most important affairs. On the contrary, innocence will always appeal for its protection, and guilt itself will seek refuge in the august sanctuary. The reason is, that the guarantee afforded by the tardy forms of the ordinary courts, is abundantly atoned for by the vast number of the judges in the Court of Peers —by the importance attached to their elevated position—and by the sort of religious awe which takes possession of them, when, at distant intervals, the law calls them from the peaceful habits of their lives, and arms them with the sword of justice.

Thus it is shown that ordinary justice is hierarchical

and successive, whilst that of the Peers is indivisible and instantaneous. Ordinary justice, by reason of its hierarchical character, is susceptible of change both in its nature and in its forms; the justice of the Peers, inasmuch as it is indivisible, is incapable of change.

But this is not the only difference existing between ordinary justice and that which the Charter has confided to our administration. The course of ordinary justice commences in secrecy and ends in publicity. Over the proceedings of the Court of Peers publicity presides, from their commencement to their close.

When ordinary justice conceives suspicions against a private individual, it silently takes measures for repressing the crime or the offence. Even in cases in which it is deemed necessary to deprive the accused of his liberty, the accusation may remain a secret between the magistrate and the accused. Should the suspicion prove unfounded, and the accused be restored to liberty by the Chamber of Accusation, (the first degree in the judicial hierarchy,) that liberation sufficiently repairs the injury sustained by personal honour in the sphere of society to which the accused belongs.

But, gentlemen, is it so when the Peers are called upon to render justice in the case of any one of those accused persons whom the law consigns to their judgment? Is not a discussion in the Chamber of Peers an important event in itself? Does not the matter to which it refers immediately become the subject of general conversation? and, if the names compromised should include those of men whose services to the State have long rendered them objects of public esteem, or even of national pride, what a sensation is excited! what conjectures are afloat! what a fine field is opened for calumny, for the outpourings of envy, hatred, and every vile passion! And, in the face of all this, are we to acquit clandestinely and without publicity, our colleagues, so injuriously compromised; and, by a silent absolution, to deprive them of the atonement they are entitled to expect from your courageous and just impartiality?

A serious affair has been submitted to our deliberation by the crown. Our duty is to judge it as a Court of Peers. In this chamber accusations have been uttered, more or less grave. We cannot forget that the names of several noble Peers have, from base motives, been compromised in this affair.

It is our duty to render them full and complete justice. By what means shall we do so?

In my endeavours to solve this question, I had almost arrived at the conclusion, that the proper course would be to arraign the accused before the court, to hear the sentence pronounced on them. But further consideration soon convinced me that we had entered on a mistaken and perilous course, and that our first duty is to end the scandalous controversy, in which virtue and honour have been exposed to the vilest attacks. What, in reality, is the question at issue? Great errors have been committed. French treasure has been improvidently wasted. But improvidence cannot be made amenable to the law. On looking over the list of the accused, I perceive only the names of men more or less obscure, suspected of acts more or less mean and contemptible—acts for the commission of which war ever has and ever will afford ample opportunity.

Three hundred millions have been expended in the Spanish war. Of that enormous sum scarcely the sixth part has been absorbed by the victorious army; and yet, inconceivable as it may appear, that army has been made to bear the whole responsibility.

However painful the recollection, it is nevertheless necessary to bear in mind the dismay which prevailed throughout Paris when, shortly after the departure of the Prince Generalissimo, the *Moniteur* officially announced the existence of a military conspiracy. The nucleus of that conspiracy was alleged to be in the Staff of His Royal Highness. But the descendant of Henry IV. was not intimidated; he showed that he could trust to the honour of French officers, and victory was the reward of his confidence. Thus were the intrigues of the past defeated; and in like manner will be thwarted the intrigues of the present. All has been intrigue throughout this affair. It has already occupied too much of our attention; and it were to be wished that we should never hear more of it either in the Chamber of Peers or in any other court. I can vote only for the full and complete acquittal of all the accused, and I recommend that the verdict be accompanied by the declaration that our colleagues have forfeited none of our esteem.

ANOTHER FRAGMENT

FROM PRINCE TALLEYRAND'S MEMOIRS.

THE king insisted that the favourable opinion entertained of the services I had rendered him, required that he should instal me in one of the high offices of the crown. The post of grand ecuyer could not be said to be either vacant or filled, as M. de L—— had not tendered his resignation. The king, who still had a leaning to old usages, thought he could not dispose of the post, though the conduct of M. de L——, since the Restoration, had not been congenial with French feeling, but altogether in unison with Austrian ideas. The office of grand chamberlain seemed to be suited to me, though I had filled it under Bonaparte, who deprived me of it to mark his dissatisfaction at the attentions I showed the Spanish princes at Valençay, and at the manner in which I had expressed myself concerning the war against Spain. I lost my post of grand chamberlain, with a salary of 100,000 francs, because I had rendered some as-

sistance, and offered some little solace, to the princes of Spain, during their sojourn at Valençay; and subsequently, the Restoration took from me the post of vice-chamberlain, with a salary of 333,000 francs. Yet I never expressed the least disquietude respecting my fortune, or any desire to seek the means of enlarging my income.

The king restored me to the post of grand chamberlain, with the emolument of 100,000 francs. This post, owing to the pretensions of the gentlemen of the bedchamber, had become a mere sinecure. It conferred rank, dignity, and emolument, without requiring the performance of any duties. The gentlemen of the bedchamber had returned to their places, with all their old pretensions; vanity prompted them to encroach on the highest and most honourable services, whilst courtly meanness made them ready to perform the most annoying and undignified duties. In the circumstances in which I was placed, I felt that my proper course of conduct was to avoid all expression of disapprobation towards the ministers who had succeeded me, and to take no part in the numerous reproaches vented on their administration. My old-fashioned notions of decorum sug-

gested to me the delicacy due from the ministers who had gone out of office, to the ministers who had come in; and I determined to confine myself completely within the sphere of my post of grand chamberlain. Accordingly, I presented myself to the king once a week: the rest of my time I spent among my old books, and in narrating the events I have witnessed in my life-time, or in which I have taken part. I never spoke in the Chamber of Peers, because I wished to avoid alike the expression of censure or approval. I rarely voted; and, in short, I endeavoured, as much as possible, to maintain the character of indifference;—a most essential qualification in a grand chamberlain. I imagined that, in observing this line of conduct towards my successors, I should secure, on their part, respect, or, at all events, their silence in reference to the administration of my colleagues and myself. I was, consequently, not a little astonished, when I found, in the journals under the control of their censorship, that all the mean adulation lavished on the existing ministers, was accompanied by comparisons prejudicial to the ministers who had preceded them. Certain comments on the treaty I had refused to sign, and to

which they had affixed their signature, appeared to me at once exceedingly unfair and maladroit; for future generations will not fail to compare the truly French feeling of the men who quitted office because they would not sign, and the pliant principles of the men who signed, in order to keep office. The fact is, that the interests of France were completely disregarded in this matter. The Allies took advantage of the inexperience of the Duke de Richelieu's administration; and that circumstance cost France the loss of some portion of her territory, at the same time entailing so many other sacrifices, that I have sometimes reproached myself for my resignation at that particular juncture. Certainly, had I been in office, France would not have been subject to the humiliations she has suffered, and which no power should have presumed to inflict on her. It is for me alone to reproach myself. In the estimation of others, I stand in that position in which it was more noble to have resigned office, because I would not sign, than to have signed for the sake of keeping my place. After all, there is some grace in knowing when to resign. The position in which I stood ought not to have exposed me to the insults of

journalists. Silence would have been more becoming; but it is difficult for people of mean spirit to restrain themselves by silence.. At first I considered these attacks unworthy of notice, and it was only by their daily renewal that I was enabled to perceive they were the result of a settled plan. It was only when they were perseveringly forced on my attention, that I found it necessary to adopt means to repress them. Public credulity readily imbibes erroneous impressions. I tried the effect of absence. I went into the country, and remained there for some time; but all in vain! Unpopularity rendered my successors dissatisfied with themselves. It is the nature of man to blame others, and not himself, for his own errors; accordingly, I was still the individual against whom censure was directed. But for my influence, it was alleged, certain things would have been done, and certain measures would have succeeded—a more decided course would have been taken, &c. &c. Little-minded people always assign their failures to causes in which they themselves have no part. I now thought it time to show less forbearance, and I openly avowed, to my friends and others, whom I casually saw, that I did

not approve the line of policy adopted by the ministers, nor indeed of any of the means resorted to for establishing the government of the Restoration. The ministerial interference with the elections, (an example which has been followed in latter times, with such disastrous results,) afforded me an opportunity of declaring my sentiments.

The first person to whom I spoke on this subject was Baron Pasquier, with whom I dined one day at the English Ambassador's. We were each waiting for his carriage, and consequently our conversation was but short. Nevertheless, it would appear that enough passed to afford grounds for misrepresentation, and the king was pleased to think that the best mode of supporting his ministry, was to show his disapproval of me. In a letter, written by the first gentleman of the bedchamber, his majesty forbade my appearing at court, without the royal permission. Thus, in the same *fauteuil* in which I had twice installed him, did Louis XVIII. sign, without any previous explanation, and on the report of a man whom he scarcely knew, an order prohibiting me from going to the Tuileries.

Whilst I was suffering under this species of dis-

grace, I had many visitors. The marshals, and other persons to whom I had never rendered any service, came to see me more frequently than those on whom I had conferred obligations. These latter were prudent; they feared lest they might themselves incur courtly disfavour. I have remarked the proneness to this kind of ingratitude at the present day. The false position in which every one has been placed since the Restoration has doubtless helped to create it. That sort of police which society itself exercises, for repressing the wrongs of society, having ceased to exist, the evil passions of human nature show themselves more openly. The emigration has largely contributed to bring about this state of things.

My disgrace did not tend to raise the king in public estimation, either abroad or at home; and his majesty was therefore desirous of bringing the matter to an end. The same Gentleman of the Chamber who wrote the letter forbidding my appearance at court, now wrote to acquaint me that the king would receive me again with pleasure. I went, and, to spare the king embarrassment, I did not attempt to enter into any explanation. I was aware that he would not acknowledge

he had been in the wrong, and yet that acknowledgment was the only great and gracious thing he could have uttered.

I felt that what passed between the king and myself entitled me to censure or disapprove measures which appeared to me injurious to France; and I began occasionally to deliver my opinion in the Chamber of Peers on the questions discussed in that assembly. I endeavoured to show that the government would gain strength by taking an honest and constitutional course, and disavowing all falsehood and evasion; that sincerity in the management of public affairs would simplify everything, and consolidate at once the position of the king and of the country. The French people are too shrewd to be imposed on for any length of time, and when once they find themselves deceived they are ever afterwards distrustful. In the interval between the sessions I made two excursions into the provinces. The aspect of nature has a wonderful effect on the mind, especially when one has just escaped from the strife and agitation of public affairs. Matters which fret and weary us in the active business of life, dwindle into insignificance in the retirement of the country. On the summit of a

mountain we feel alike beyond the reach of towering ambition and grovelling malice. There all the annoying phantoms of life vanish.

At the beginning of winter I returned to Paris. My associations were limited to persons whose opinions coincided with my own, and I took part in no public business except the discussions on the liberty of the press, which were maintained during two or three years successively. I observed the course of events in all parts of Europe, and watched the contest that was maintained between despotism and constitutional government. The first decided outbreaks of this contest were manifested at Naples and at Venice. Speedily the revolution in Spain spread agitation throughout France, and brought to light the work in which the Jesuits had been secretly engaged since the Restoration. The ministry, which was composed of emigrants, or of persons whose minds were tainted with the prejudice and bigotry which the emigration had brought back to France, conferred all government appointments on persons of their own way of thinking, or on those who, from interested motives, affected to coincide in their views. Then followed congress upon congress, intrigue upon intrigue;

and the Emperor Alexander showed his feebleness of character by seeking refuge in that Holy Alliance which too plainly demonstrated that sovereigns had interests apart from those of their subjects. I often think of what must be the result of the existing conflict between intelligence and despotism. I reflect on the great change that will be wrought by new compacts between subjects and sovereigns. It is only by this means that social order can be established. We are told that this or that particular country requires more stringent measures of government than others; but all nations have rights, which vary according to the greater or less degree of civilization they may have reached. The recognition of these rights is at once the security of thrones and the guarantee of public freedom. These rights may and can be enforced without popular convulsions; but, in proportion as the rights of mankind are disavowed or withheld, the more violent will be the struggles to recover them, and in the end these struggles will prove triumphant. This is my opinion, and it will remain unaltered to the latest day of my life.

LETTER TO HIS MAJESTY KING WILLIAM IV., FROM PRINCE TALLEYRAND, ON HIS BEING APPOINTED AMBASSADOR FROM FRANCE.

"SIRE,—His Majesty the King of the French has been pleased to make me the interpreter of the sentiments he cherishes for your Majesty.

"I have joyfully accepted a mission which gives so noble a direction to the last steps of my long public career.

"Sire, amidst all the vicissitudes through which I have passed during my long life—amidst all the changes of good and ill fortune I have undergone during the last forty years, no circumstance has afforded me such perfect gratification as the appointment which brings me back to this happy country. But how great is the change between the period when I was formerly here and the present time! The jealousies and prejudices which so long divided France and England have given place to enlightened sentiments of esteem and affection. Unity of feeling rivets the bonds of amity between the two countries. England, like

France, repudiates the principle of intervention in the internal affairs of neighbouring states; and the ambassador of a sovereign unanimously chosen by a great nation, feels himself at home in a land of freedom, as the missionary to a descendant of the illustrious house of Brunswick.

"I feel that I may with confidence implore your Majesty's kind consideration of the subjects which I am commanded to submit to your attention, and I beg, Sire, to offer the homage of my profound respect."

OPINION OF PRINCE TALLEYRAND ON THE PLAN OF LAW RELATIVE TO JOURNALS AND PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS.

Delivered in the Chamber of Peers, in the sitting of Tuesday, July 24, 1821.

"GENTLEMEN,—In presenting myself before this assembly, I experience the embarrassment of feeling the utter inutility of the observations I am about to make, but to which, nevertheless, I consider it my duty to give utterance. By a deplorable fatality, the causes of which it is not my purpose at present

to inquire into, the questions in appearance submitted to our consideration, are already resolved—irrevocably resolved. We discuss, as though our discussions were affairs of some import; whilst, in reality, we are but the instruments of imperious necessity. Laws and budgets are laid before us, and they who would naturally be our opponents in discussing them, are not here; their absence operates as a sort of command upon us. The Chamber of Peers, by the position in which it is placed, will soon degenerate into a Court of Registration, a mere semblance of the constitutional hierarchy. Hence, it follows, that those who absolutely desire to see in France a real Chamber of Peers—that those who regard it as essential to the monarchy—seeing it annihilated for the present, look forward to the future. In their inability to remedy the present evil, they indulge in prophetic warnings, which it is easy to turn into ridicule; or they offer advice which levity despises and weakness rejects.

"I apply, gentlemen, these considerations to the law now submitted to your attention. Is it the work of the Ministry? No; for, on the one hand, it is more limited in its duration than the primitive law, a circumstance of which I am certainly not

disposed to complain; and, on the other hand, its restrictions extend to literature, science, and the arts, (heretofore exempt from the coercion of the censorship:) and at these restrictions I am assuredly not disposed to rejoice. Is it certain that these various modifications meet the concurrence of the majority of this Chamber? Possibly they do not; and yet, what can we do? Are we free to amend, in our turn, the amendments of the all-powerful Chamber of Deputies? No, gentlemen; and I say so, not with the view of reflecting blame on the Chamber of Deputies, (which has merely exercised its constitutional privileges in a very constitutional manner,) but to complain that the Chamber of Peers is stripped of all its privileges by tardy presentations, which leave it neither time to deliberate nor power to resist.

"Convinced as I am that the fate of the present law is determined beforehand; that a discussion, however warm, will not influence its rejection, or even tend to modify its effects; I present myself here, less for the purpose of opposing it, than to prevent its reappearance, when it shall have lived through its legal period of existence. I speak for the interest of the future session, and not for the

interest of the present one. I do not hope, gentlemen, to convince you now; my object is to pave the way for a more free and more profound discussion at a future time.

"The liberty of the press, applied to politics, is, as has already been stated, neither more nor less than the liberty of the journals.

"We are all desirous to enjoy the blessings of representative government; it is the government which the king has granted to us.

"Representative government cannot exist without the liberty of the press, which is one of its essential instruments; indeed, its principal instrument. Every government has its own machinery; and it must always be borne in mind that institutions which are salutary to one government, may be injurious to another. It has been proved to demonstration by several members of this Chamber, who, during the present and preceding sessions, have spoken on the subject now under consideration, that, without the liberty of the press, there can be no representative government. I will not, therefore, weary you by repeating that which you must all have heard or read, and which must frequently have been the subject of your own meditations.

"But there are two points of view in which it appears to me that the question has not been adequately considered, and which I will reduce to the two following propositions—

"I. The liberty of the press is a necessity of the age.

"II. A government endangers its stability when it obstinately refuses to grant that which the age proclaims to be necessary.

"The human mind is never completely stationary. The discovery of yesterday is but the medium for arriving at a new discovery to-morrow. Nevertheless it is true that human intelligence would seem to advance by crises; there are periods when that intelligence is urged forward by the desire of creating and producing; and there are times when, satisfied with its acquisitions, it appears to repose within itself, and to be occupied in arranging and setting in order the riches it possesses, rather than in earning new wealth. The seventeenth century was one of these fortunate epochs. The human mind, amazed at the vast treasures of which it had become possessed through the invention of printing, seemed to stop short in its onward movement, as if eager to rest in the enjoyment of its magni-

ficent heritage. Revelling in the luxuries of literature, science, and the arts, it set its glory on the production of master-pieces. The great men of the age of Louis XIV. vied one with another in embellishing a state of society, beyond which they could see nothing or wish for nothing, and which seemed destined to endure as long as the glory of the great king who engrossed all their respect and enthusiasm. But the fertile mine of antiquity being exhausted, the activity of the human mind was turned, as it were by force, into another channel, and it found novelty in those speculative studies which embrace the whole future, and whose limits are indefinable. Such were the circumstances which ushered in the commencement of the eighteenth century, destined to prove so dissimilar to the century that had preceded it. The poetic lessons of Telemachus were succeeded by the theories of the Esprit des Lois; and the Port-Royal was superseded by the Encyclopedia.

"I beg you to observe, gentlemen, that I am neither concurring nor approving, but merely narrating.

"On looking back to the disasters which befel France during the Revolution, we should guard

against being wholly unjust to those master spirits whose writings gave the first impulse to that great event. We must not forget that if those writers did not always steer clear of error, yet that we owe to them the revelation of many great truths. We must bear in mind that those men are in no way responsible for the inconsiderate precipitancy with which France, almost unanimously, rushed into the career which they had merely traced out in perspective. Views which had been only theoretically developed were suddenly carried into practical effect; and the result has shown the awful consequences which ensue when man, prompted by insane self-confidence, ventures to go beyond the necessities of the age—the gulf of misfortune then yawns before him. But in merely working such changes as are dictated by the wants of the age, we are certain not to diverge very far from the right course.

"Now, gentlemen, let us see what were the real necessities of the age in the year 1789. The changes which were suggested by the mature reflection of enlightened men may be fairly regarded as necessities. The Constituent Assembly was merely the interpreter of those necessities when it proclaimed the liberty of religious worship,

equality in the eye of the law; the free right of jurisdiction, (every one being amenable to his natural judges,) and the liberty of the press.

"But the Constituent Assembly was not in accordance with the spirit of the age when it instituted a single Chamber; when it destroyed the royal sanction; when it tortured consciences, &c. Yet, notwithstanding the errors of that Assembly, (errors of which I have named only a few, and which were followed by great calamities,) it will enjoy, in the judgment of posterity, the glory of having established the bases of our new public law. The august author of the charter—the monarch who is worthy of France, as France is worthy of him—has consecrated in his noble work the only great principles furnished by the Constituent Assembly.

"Let us take it for granted that laws which are wished for—which are proclaimed to be good and salutary by the most enlightened men of a country, and which have been so proclaimed during a series of years—are necessities of the age. One of these laws, gentlemen, is the liberty of the press. I appeal to all those among you who are most especially my contemporaries—was not the liberty of the

press an object ardently desired by all those excellent men whom we have admired in our youth—the Malesherbes, the d'Estignys, and the Trudaines?—who, to say the least, were not inferior to any of the statesmen who have flourished since their time. The place which the men I have just named occupy in our recollections, sufficiently proves that the liberty of the press consolidates legitimate renown, and if it ruins usurped reputations, where is the evil?

"If I have said enough to prove that the liberty of the press is, in France, the necessary result of the present state of society, it now only remains for me to establish my second proposition—viz., that a government endangers its stability when it obstinately refuses to grant that which the age proclaims to be a necessity.

"In the most tranquil and happy conditions of society there is always a certain number of men who aspire to gain, by the help of disorder, the wealth which they possess not, and the importance which they ought not to possess. Is it wise to place in the hands of these enemies of social order, weapons of discontent, without which their perversity would ever remain powerless? Why give them

the privilege of continually claiming the fulfilment of a promise? They will but abuse that privilege, and in this instance they are not, as in some others, seeking merely a chimerical good.

"Society, in its progressive advance, is destined to feel new necessities. I readily admit that governments ought not rashly to acknowledge them or to convert them into laws. But when these necessities have once been acknowledged, to take back what has been granted, or (which amounts to the same thing) to withhold that which has been granted, or to suspend it unceasingly, is a dangerous course, of which I earnestly hope those who have put it in practice may not have reason to repent. A government should never compromise its own good faith. In the present age, it is not easy to carry on deception for any lengthened period of time. There is a power whose wisdom is superior to that of Voltaire, whose intelligence is greater than that of Bonaparte—a power, in short, superior to the directors or to any of the ministers, past, present, or to come—that power is the great mass of mankind. To engage, or at least to persist, in a conflict on any question on which the majority of the world conceive their interests to be at stake, is an error, and all political errors are dangerous.

"When the freedom of the press exists, when people know that their interests will be defended, they trust that time will render them justice, however tardily that justice may come. They rely on hope, and with reason, for even hope cannot be long deceived. But when the liberty of the press is restricted, when no complaint is permitted to be heard, discontent forces a government either into too much weakness or too much severity.

"But these reflections are carrying me too far, and I must conclude. For the interest of the King and of France, I demand a repressive law, and I vote against the censorship."

OPINION OF THE BISHOP OF AUTUN ON THE SUBJECT OF ECCLESIASTICAL PROPERTY, DELIVERED IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN THE YEAR 1789.

[THE following extracts comprise the principal points of this address.]

"I have stated, gentlemen, the reasons which lead me to believe that ecclesiastical property is national property. If those reasons, which

nothing has for an instant shaken in my own mind, appear to you of some weight in themselves, how much more weighty, how much more decisive must they not appear under all the circumstances of the present juncture? Let us only look around us; the public fortune is tottering—its approaching fall threatens all other fortunes, and in this universal disaster who would have greater cause to fear than the clergy? Invidious comparisons have long been made between the public indigence and the private opulence of many among us; let us silence in one moment these unpleasant murmurs, so offensive to our patriotism. Let us deliver up to the nation both our persons and our fortunes;—the nation will never forget the act.

"Let us not say that the clergy, merely from being no longer landed proprietors, will on that account become less worthy of public consideration. No! the clergy will not be the less revered by the people from their being paid by the nation; for the heads of offices, ministers, and even kings themselves, receive salaries without being the less honoured on that account. No! the clergy will not become odious to the people, for it is not from the individual hands of the citizens that the minister

of religion will seek his tribute, but from the public treasury, like all the other mandatories of the government. Do we not constantly see the people consenting to forget that the functionaries of the state are in their pay, and uniting with their generous tributes the personal homage of respect for men whose duties are often opposed to their passions, and sometimes even to their interests? Who shall persuade us to believe that the French people, whose sense of justice is greater than their calumniators would lead us to suppose, would withdraw their grateful esteem from those who ought not, who will not, who cannot inspire them with any but virtuous sentiments; who would pour into their bosoms the consolations of charity, and discharge towards them at all times the most paternal duties?

"Say not that the cause of religion is bound up with this question;—say rather, what we all know, say that the greatest act of religion which would redound to our own honour, would be to hasten the arrival of that period when a better order of things will sweep away the abuses of corruption, and will prevent the occurrence of that multitude of open crimes and secret offences which are the fruits of great public calamities. Say that the noblest

homage that can be paid to religion, is to contribute to the formation of a state of social order which should foster and protect the virtues religion ordains and rewards, and which, in the perfection of society, should constantly remind men of the benefactor of nature. The people, brought back to religion by the feeling of their own happiness, will remember, not without gratitude, the sacrifices which the ministers of religion will have made for the general good. Everything unites in demanding it. Public opinion everywhere proclaims the law of justice, united to that of necessity. A few moments longer, and we shall lose, in an unequal and degrading struggle, the honour of a generous resignation. Let us meet necessity, and we shall seem not to fear it, or rather, to use a form of expression more worthy of you, we shall in reality not fear it. We should not then be dragged to the altar of the country; we should be bearing to it a voluntary offering. Of what use is it to defer the moment? What troubles, what misfortunes might not have been prevented, if the sacrifices consummated here for three months past had been made in proper time a gift of patriotism? Let us show that we wish to be citizens, and

citizens only, and that we really desire to join in the national unity which France so ardently longs for. Finally, in ceasing to form a body which is a constant object of envy, the clergy will become an assemblage of citizens, and objects of national gratitude.

"In conclusion, then, I would recommend that the principle involving the proprietorship of the ecclesiastical revenues should be at once determined; and, to avoid all appearance of equivocation, I would recommend it should be decreed by the National Assembly that the nation is the real proprietor, and can dispose of them for the public good. The nation must at the same time pledge itself to preserve for each incumbent that which really belongs to him, and to provide for the due settlement (in such manner as may be deemed most fitting) of the real obligations with which those properties are burthened."

EXTRACTS FROM THE SPEECH OF THE BISHOP OF AUTUN, ON THE OCCASION OF HIS MOTION ON THE SUBJECT OF ECCLESIASTICAL REFORM, ON THE 10TH OF OCTOBER, 1789.

"THE state has for a long time had to struggle with the greatest difficulties: none of us are ignorant of this fact, and therefore powerful means must be employed to meet them. Ordinary measures have been exhausted; the people are hard-pressed on every side, and the slightest additional burden would naturally be felt insupportable. In fact, it is not to be thought of. Extraordinary resources have just been tried, but they are principally destined for the extraordinary necessities of the present year. We want provision for the future—we want provision for the entire restoration of order. There exists one immense and decided resource, and one which in my opinion (for otherwise I should repel the idea) may be combined with a rigid respect for property. This resource appears to me to lie entirely in the ecclesiastical revenues.

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"I do not mean a contribution towards maintaining the burthens of the state proportional to that arising from other kinds of property; this could never be viewed in the light of a sacrifice. The operation I point at is one of far greater importance to the nation. * * * *

"It appears evident to me that the clergy are not in the position of other landed proprietors, because the property they enjoy (and which they cannot dispose of) has been given, not for personal interest, but for the performance of certain duties.

"It would also appear that the nation, in virtue of the extensive powers it possesses over all the bodies contained within it, has a right to destroy, if not the whole, at all events, portions of the ecclesiastical body, if they are considered hurtful, or even useless, and that this right over their existence necessarily carries with it an extensive right over the disposal of its property.

"It is moreover certain that the nation, precisely because it is the protector of the wishes of the founders, can, and even ought to suppress those livings which have become sinecures.

"Thus far there is no difficulty; but the question is, Can the nation also reduce the revenue

of the actual incumbents, and dispose of a portion of that revenue? There appears to me one very simple answer to the arguments of those who deny this right.

"However inviolable may be the possession of a property which is guaranteed by law, it is clear that the law cannot change the nature of the property by guaranteeing it; and that, in the case of ecclesiastical property, it can only ensure to each actual incumbent the enjoyment of what has really been granted to him by the act of his foundation. Now, it is well known that all the foundation-titles of ecclesiastical property, as well as the various laws of the church explanatory of the sense and the spirit of those titles, show that only that portion of the property which is necessary for the decent maintenance of the incumbent really belongs to him—that he is merely the administrator of the remainder, which remainder is really destined for the relief of the poor, or the repair of the temples of God. If, then, the nation carefully ensures to each incumbent (whatever may be the nature of his living) that respectable maintenance, it will not be encroaching upon his individual property. If, at the same time, it takes upon itself, as it has the undoubted right to do, the administra-

tion of the rest; if it undertakes the other obligations attached to these properties, such as the maintenance of hospitals and charitable institutions, the repairs of churches, the expenses of public education, &c.; if, above all, these resources are drawn upon only at the moment of a general calamity, it appears to me that all the intentions of the founders will be fulfilled, and full justice will have been rigidly accomplished.

"Thus, in brief recapitulation, I would state my belief, that the nation may, without injustice, in a period of general distress, 1st, dispose of the properties of the different religious communities which it may be desirable to suppress, ensuring, at the same time, means of subsistence to the incumbents; 2ndly, turn to immediate account (always carrying out the general spirit of the founders) the revenues of all the sinecure livings which may be vacant, and secure those of all similar livings as they become vacant; and 3rdly, reduce, according to a certain proportion, the present revenues of the incumbents, whenever they shall exceed a certain given sum, the nation taking upon itself a portion of the obligations with which those properties were originally charged."

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EXTRACTS FROM THE ADDRESS OF THE BISHOP OF AUTUN ON THE SUBJECT OF BANKS, AND ON THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF ORDER IN THE FRENCH FINANCES.

Delivered in the National Assembly, on Friday, Dec. 4th, 1789.

"As a member of the committee whose report you have just heard, I consider myself entitled to address you, both for the purpose of submitting to you some ideas of my own on the subject of the *caisse d'escompte,* and more especially with the view of bringing to bear upon this subject some important questions, inseparable from it, and essentially connected with the great interests which now so urgently engage your attention.

"The idea of the establishment of a national bank in France, is one which has excited great attention, and which has gained great favour in public opinion.

"Many persons who entertain sound views on the subject of credit, consider such an establishment as indispensable, whilst even those who are least acquainted with the subject — those who scarcely know what a bank is, and who are totally

ignorant of the organization suitable to a national bank, seem to derive confidence, amidst the present want of credit, simply from understanding that the National Assembly contemplates the establishment of a national bank. It would indeed seem as if the mere name of a bank were alone sufficient to settle everything; but we must be careful to observe that it is only a well-constituted bank that ought to be established, and not a national bank of any sort. Banks are by no means simple institutions; their object is indeed everywhere the same —to facilitate the circulation of exchanges, and to lower the interest of money; but the means they employ must vary extremely. Banks may be likened to highly-tempered instruments, which must be managed with caution and skill, because either great good or great evil may result from their use. Here, above all, you must be upon your guard against the various systems suggested by cupidity, by superficial knowledge, or by that half-acquaintance with the subject which is so common and so dangerous. It cannot, therefore, be entirely useless to recall to your attention, for the purpose of refuting them, the different ideas which have been promulgated on the creation of a national bank in

France, particularly as some of these views have neither been opposed nor discussed, and are, perhaps, of a nature to mislead the well-intentioned. Let us take a cursory view of them.

"The creation of a national bank has been proposed. My opinion is, that a well-constituted bank ought not to be a national bank, whether by that title we understand simply the responsibility of the nation, or that the nation should have established the bank on its own account.

"People are led to believe that, because the nation is about to render itself responsible for the public debt, it might also be answerable for the funds of a bank; but it is very important that these two things should not be confounded.

"The nation ought undoubtedly to become responsible for the public debt, inasmuch as the sums which compose that debt have been lent to the nation, have been employed by the nation, and have been entrusted to the only recognised representative of the nation. In fact, properly speaking, the nation cannot be said to be security for the debt, for the nation is the debtor itself.

"The guarantee which the nation would grant to the bank should be of a totally different nature.

"So far from this national guarantee imparting credit to a bank, such an arrangement would have the effect of depriving of all credit the nation capable of adopting it. Who would place confidence in a nation which should be imprudent enough to entrust to a small number of individuals the management of a bank whose operations would necessarily be unlimited, and whereby all the national property would become mortgaged?

"It may readily be imagined that every possible precaution would be taken to prevent the managers of the bank from being unfaithful to their trust; but still the possibility will always remain, that, should a misfortune befal the bank, it would be necessary either to levy enormous contributions on the property of the country, or to declare the nation itself bankrupt. Would any prudent nation incur the risk of reducing itself to such an alternative? Would any honest nation, valuing a character for integrity, offer a responsibility which might prove illusory?

"The nation, then, cannot, ought not, to become guarantee for the bank.

"Still less ought the nation to establish the bank on its own account; for, to all the inconveniences

resulting from responsibility, there would be added many others. The nation would have only two methods to choose between, either to entrust the administration of the bank to salaried officials, or to personally interested managers. In the first case, there would be too much reason to fear that the management of the bank would not receive due attention; while, in the second case, there would be an equal risk of the directors seeking immoderate profits, under the pretence of serving the interests of the nation with which they would be associated. In either case, should any misfortune befal the bank, the representatives of the country would, with much less freedom, deliver their opinion on events in which the interest of the whole nation would be compromised, than if they had merely to judge the conduct of private directors. And, finally, in both cases the annual expenses of management would be increased, and the portion of profits which the nation might directly claim from the operations of the bank, would certainly not indemnify it for the incalculable loss resulting from the diminished interest of money in the kingdom.

"The nation, therefore, cannot become guarantee

for the bank, nor can the bank be established on account of the nation."

"It has been proposed to establish banks of discount (*caisses d'escompte*) in different towns of the kingdom, and this plan certainly looks somewhat plausible; for it would seem at first sight that if banks of discount are useful, they cannot be too much multiplied, and that if they are favourable to commerce, they ought, above all, to be established in commercial towns.

"But it is easy to perceive that a single bank of discount, or bank of aid (*banque de secours*), placed in the capital, in the centre of circulation, would not only animate the commerce of the place in which it is established, but would necessarily extend its influence throughout the whole of the kingdom.

"Now, a number of banks of discount, or banks of aid, would not produce the same advantages; for by mutually increasing their credit, they would infallibly injure each other.

"In the first place, the multiplicity of these banks would oblige every individual to examine all the different bank-notes presented to him, whilst at present a great portion of the confidence with which

these notes are received, proceeds from the circumstance of their requiring no examination, being recognisable at first sight, almost as readily as pieces of coin.

"This observation is, perhaps, more important than it may appear. There can be no doubt that a degree of credit would be attached to the notes of a single bank applicable to the whole kingdom, which would never be accorded to the notes of a number of banks, dispersed among the provinces; for, as each of these several banks would enjoy a different degree of credit, the notes of each would require previous examination, before being taken in payment.

"But, independently of this consideration, another very grave inconvenience would arise. The embarrassments of any one of these banks would inevitably operate prejudicially on the credit of the rest, from the correspondence which would exist among them. To multiply the places where these embarrassments might ensue, would be to multiply their probability, and it is, doubtless, important not to augment the chances which may compromise the trade and the monetary circulation of the kingdom

"A plan has been proposed for supplying the place of this multiplicity of banks, by admitting the existence of one general bank alone, having in most of the provincial towns branch establishments, where the notes of the bank would be paid on presentation. This idea is the most impracticable of all. With the inconveniences of the preceding plan, it combines a still greater inconvenience of its own; for it is evident that the bank, instead of merely holding in its principal treasury such portion of its capital as prudence might show to be necessary, would at the same time require to hold a similar portion in each of its branch establishments. But for this precaution, it would be in the power of evil-disposed persons to convey a considerable number of notes into any particular town in which there was a branch bank; even chance, or some circumstance impossible to foresee, might draw a great quantity of notes at one time into some particular branch bank, which might not be in a condition to honour them. If there were but fifty of these branch offices dispersed in different towns of the kingdom, the probability is, that there would be a failure of the bank in different places almost every day of the

year, though the sums it held in cash, distributed among its different treasuries, might, in the aggregate, be very much beyond the whole demands made upon it."

* * * * *

"As to the banking plan which has been proposed to you by the Minister of Finance, and which, on that account, merits your deepest attention, I shall add little to the observations which have already been made in opposition to it. I shall confine myself to a single remark, which, however, I must confess, appears to me decisive. This plan is founded on the creation of a paper circulation *not convertible into money at will*, consequently, on the creation of a paper-money. Now, there do not exist, at least in my opinion, two ideas more opposed to each other than the existence of paper-money and of a bank: the one bears the character of constraint and authority, whilst the other, on the contrary, can be maintained only by the most free and unlimited confidence.

"Although I have thus shown, or at least mentioned, the inconveniences of most of the banking systems which have been proposed, it is not my intention to submit to you any plan of my own. I

will, however, add a few observations bearing on the questions now under consideration. They may perhaps throw some light on principles which seem to me not sufficiently understood.

"The fundamental law of any bank whatever, is to fulfil its engagements when they fall due: I know of no other. If the particular position of the bank is such as to enable it to undertake engagements at sight, and payable at any moment, then this bank should be so regulated as to be at all times fully prepared to pay its engagements on presentation. Such is the rule which common sense would dictate.

"It is a common idea that the direct object of a bank is to throw notes into circulation. Undoubtedly the power of issuing notes is an immediate consequence of the credit of a bank; but we must beware of confounding this result with the real object of the institution of a *banque de secours*. When we seek a principle, we must of necessity disengage it from its consequences, however clear and direct they may be.

"The object of a bank composed of partners *en commandite*, like the caisse d'escompte, is to furnish assistance to commerce by bringing together

funds to be applied to discounting good bills at a moderate rate of interest. When bills are presented for discount at this bank, the directors, provided they agree to give the accommodation, grant a *bon*, or order, to receive the cash at their treasury. The bearer of this order proceeds to the treasury, procures the cash, and carries it away. This is the natural course of proceeding, which was pursued at the commencement; but after going through the process of discounting paper repeatedly, and finding that the order on the treasury was always paid on presentation, it was soon perceived that it would be paid with equal punctuality on the following day, and that it was sometimes more convenient to carry home the order, and send for the cash when required. This order was next given in payment to some third party, who, being also aware of the exactness with which it would be paid, was in no hurry to present it; and thus, the knowledge of the punctual payment of the orders furnished by the directors of the bank upon their treasury produced in the end the effect, that everybody felt it to be a matter of indifference whether he held the note, or the cash which it represented.

"The consequence of this has been that those

holding an interest in the establishment, finding that many parties abstained from sending for payment of the notes made payable at sight at the treasury, thought they were justified, when good bills were brought to them with dates not too distant, in discounting them with a part of the cash destined to meet their own notes. It is clear, however, that they could not properly employ for this purpose any portion of the cash beyond that which, in the nature of things, would not be demanded of them before the period fixed for the return of the money which had been advanced upon the bills they had discounted.

"So long as bank directors conform, in this respect, to the rules of prudence, their notes obtain such a degree of confidence, on account of the readiness with which they are handled and circulated, that cash is often brought for the purpose of buying notes on their treasury. If, on the contrary, abusing this confidence, and desirous of extending their transactions and their profits, they allow themselves at any time to alienate a portion of their funds, to such an amount as might subject them to the risk of being applied to for more cash than they possess, in that case there is at once an

end of confidence. Thenceforward, their notes are looked upon only as paper, of which the payment is uncertain; and, as the business relations of the *Banque de Secours* connect its directors with all the bankers of the capital, and with almost all the branches of circulation in the kingdom, there arises a feeling of great distrust at home, and still greater abroad, which rapidly turns the exchange to our disadvantage, and leads to a restriction of the currency and all the evils resulting therefrom.

"What, then, should be the conduct of the directors of such an establishment at periods when confidence is shaken? Their course is very simple. They ought to know that at those times they may be applied to for payment of a portion of their notes, perhaps of all. They ought, therefore, to use only an unimportant portion, or even none, of the funds in their treasury destined to redeem their notes.

"It would be absurd, therefore, for the directors of a *Banque de Secours* to pretend there was nothing wrong in its management so long as they should maintain in their treasury an amount of cash equivalent to the *third* or *fourth* part of the amount of their notes in circulation. In this respect, it is impossible to fix any absolute propor-

tion. It is necessary that the directors of a bank should possess a sufficient degree of foresight to provide themselves, not with a fourth or a third, but with a half, or three fourths, or even the whole amount of the funds representing the notes, whenever any corresponding number of notes are likely to be presented for payment.

"But, it may be said, the bank would in that case make no profit. To this I reply, that the chief object of the protection which the government or the nation may grant to a *Banque de Secours,* is not to enable those holding an interest in the bank to make, under all possible circumstances, considerable and uninterrupted profits. Undoubtedly the nation should desire to see the bank prosper, because it is by profit alone that the interested parties can be induced to maintain an establishment of the sort, and because the existence of such an establishment is useful in a state; but the nation has no interest in desiring more than that the shareholders should make such profits as are sufficient to induce them to carry on the bank."

* * * * *

"At periods when confidence is shaken, it is necessary for a public bank to restrict its opera-

tions. The directors of such an establishment would be very imprudent, or even culpable, if, instead of resigning themselves to bear their portion of the misfortunes of the times, they were to persist, contrary to the natural course of things, in giving always an equal extension to their operations, at the risk of being at length compelled to come to a stop.

"The *Caisse d'Escompte* seems to have fallen into some of these difficulties, and to have failed to recognise the fundamental principle of all banks, which consists in never failing to meet engagements." * * * * *

"The *Caisse d'Escompte* has undoubtedly transgressed the rules prescribed to it; and yet it is, perhaps, allowable not to weigh its conduct in an ordinary balance. It had furnished money which, doubtless, it had not the right to furnish, because it did not belong to it; but it has given that assistance in a crisis which has baffled all human foresight, and out of deference to a minister in whom the nation has so justly placed confidence. It is not necessary that the Assembly should convert the *Caisse d'Escompte* into a national bank, but it is unquestionably necessary that it should keep account of its advances with the *Caisse*."

"M. Necker's suggestion on this point does not, I must confess, appear to me to attain the object desired. I can recognise no real payment in paper-money, or, if there is a real payment, I see in it a preference accorded to the *Caisse d'Escompte*, which may have the appearance of an injustice to the other creditors of the state. Why create a paper-money specially in favour of the *Caisse d'Escompte*, and leave other parties to suffer whose claims upon the nation are at least as sacred?"

* * * * *

"The claims of the *Caisse d'Escompte* are not less sacred than those of others, I grant; but neither are they more so. I will not, therefore, recommend you to create paper-money for the other creditors, as well as for the *Caisse*, but I would conjure you not to create it at all. The inevitable effect of all paper-money is, as you know, the rapid disappearance of cash. The fictitious currency drives away the real; and as the former can never be a perfectly exact representation of the latter, it happens that it drives away far more than it replaces. From that moment the paper no longer maintains an equality with cash; it falls below par, and hence the most fatal consequences. All the creditors who receive payment in notes lose the difference, while, on the

other hand, all the debtors to whom cash had been advanced, gain the difference, and hence arise a destruction of property and a general want of faith in payments—a want of faith the more odious as it has the sanction of legality. Moreover, as soon as one set of engagements between individuals is settled, fresh ones will be formed, or there would be an end of all business transactions; and here recommences, in an opposite direction, an operation no less fatal, no less convulsive, by which the creditors, in their turn, will ruin the debtors. Fearing a repayment in notes, and adding by anticipation the present loss upon those notes to the still greater loss which they expect may afterwards be incurred, they swell out their claims to an unreasonable extent. Thus they entail the ruin of their debtors when the time arrives at which there shall be no more notes, or when confidence shall have brought them to an equality with cash. It is evident that this is not a reparation of the injustice first alluded to, but an entirely new species of injustice, inasmuch as there is neither the same proportion, nor the same contracting parties, nor the same engagements."

* * * * *

"The more we reflect on the true principles of credit, the more are we convinced that there exists in this respect no difference between a nation and a private individual. A nation, like a private person, possesses credit only so long as it is known to have the will and the power to pay. A nation, like an individual, can do nothing better towards its creditors than to pay in ready money its engagements when due. If, through some unfortunate circumstances, the means of payment in cash are wanting, the best—the only course which a nation, like an individual, can then adopt, is to propose to its creditors only such arrangements as are secure of being carried into effect, for nothing destroys confidence like exaggerated promises."

* * * * *

"Rest assured that every mechanical means of bringing about the re-appearance of specie, such as the melting down of plate, the purchase of materials at a great expense, or other such temporary expedients, though they may afford the appearance of relief, have really nothing substantial or durable in their nature. When once the public feeling leads to the hoarding or the exportation of specie,

that which you produce in this way will speedily be withdrawn from the circulation like the rest. It is only by securing public opinion, and by furnishing irresistible motives of confidence, that credit can be ensured; and those who fear that, even after the restoration of order, the specie which seems to have vanished from among us will not re-appear, are mistaken. Gold and silver are necessarily transported, like other articles of merchandize, wherever there exist the will and the power to pay for them; they are even transported more readily by reason of the ease with which they are removed. So long as the nation has a surplus to dispose of, the gold and silver required will always be procured; for it must not be forgotten that, if gold and silver are the purchasing medium for all other things, all other things are equally the purchasing medium for those metals. For a nation which has nothing to give, there can be nothing to obtain; but those nations which have an immense surplus, cannot long want anything which may be purchased, and, least of all, gold and silver.

"Since the position of your finances compels you to be the debtors of other nations, prove yourselves to be the best possible debtors; you have

the means to do so. Only show that you know how to set about it, and you will soon see flowing into the country the capital of the foreigner, who only awaits that moment to come and exchange it for your effects. You will see immense sums brought to light which are at present yielding nothing, and which would be gladly exchanged for productive securities bearing annual interest, when once it is felt that the payment of that interest is certain, and that the capital will not be endangered."

* * * * *

In conclusion, the Bishop of Autun submitted to the National Assembly a series of articles having for their object the establishment of a sinking fund for the gradual extinction of the public debt, the means of raising the necessary portions of which for each succeeding year were to be determined at the commencement of each session of the legislature.

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THE END.

T. C. Savill, Printer, 4, Chandos-street, Covent-garden.

00142014

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 15 June, 2016